"JEALOUS OF HERSELF," A NEW WOMAN'S STORY, AND "CATCHING THE SMUGGLERS," BOYS' STORY, NEXT WEEK

CHICAGO LEDGER

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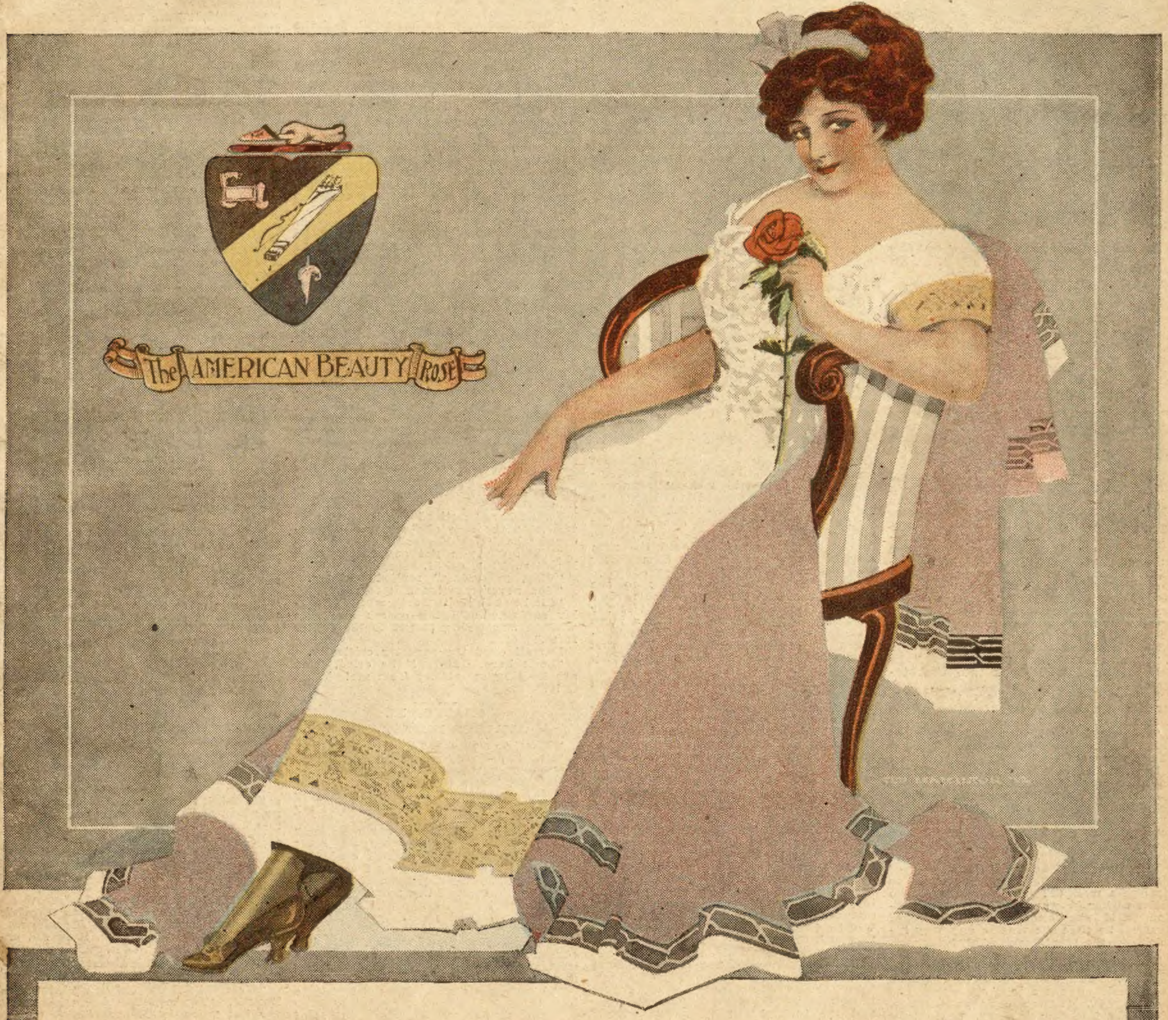
TWIN ROSES

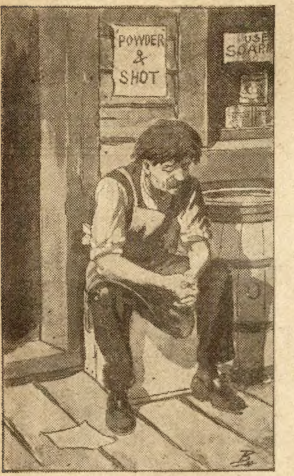


American Beauties, we greet you today,
And beg at your altar a tribute to lay,
A fragment of rhyme that springs from the heart
Like song from the birds when nesting days start.

American Beauties, we bring you this praise
Because you make sweeter June's odorous days----
Girl-rose and rose of the garden so fair,
Blossoms with which there are none to compare!

Fetters of Guilt

By Will Lisenbee



The proprietor was dozing on the porch.

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CHAPTER IX.
QUIGLEY IS MYSTIFIED.

I'LL tell you what we will do," said Quigley. "We shall first try to find out if Potter reached Willow Creek. If he came there and joined Dent, there ought to be some one who knows of it. He did not come through Mapleton, I suppose, for it is more likely that he would have got off the train at Woodville station, or he might have got off at the junction near Willow Creek. You see, the train from St. Louis stops there, and knowing Dent was encamped on the creek near by, it is more than likely that he would get off at the junction."

Sears nodded slowly.

"I can see where you are right," he said, rising. "We'll look into that tomorrow."

The two descended from the bandstand and walked in the direction of the Black Bear.

"I think I shall turn in," remarked Sears, as they reached the inn. "I'll see you in the morning."

Dennis Quigley took a seat on the porch to finish his cigar. The events of the day had given him much food for thought. The vision of a pair of dark eyes haunted him, and every detail of the incidents resulting from his visit to the secluded farm among the hills came vividly to his mind.

Why had his allusion to the murder of Mortimer Dent affected the girl in so strange a manner? He remembered the pallor of her face and the signs of agitation. Did she know Mortimer Dent? Could it be that she was in any way involved in the mysterious affair?

Dennis Quigley pondered over the questions, but he could not arrive at any decision. The story told by Thomas Sears had brought a new character into the tragedy. It was easy to surmise, after hearing Sears' story, that there might have been a quarrel between Dent and Potter, and the result of it might naturally enough have led to the tragedy.

While these thoughts were passing through the mind of Quigley, the landlord came out and took a seat near him.

"Have you got any trace of the man Smith yet?" Bartwell asked, in a low tone, edging his chair a little closer to Quigley.

"Not the slightest," replied the reporter. "He seems to have vanished from sight after leaving the inn."

"There's a little point I thought worth mentioning," pursued the landlord. "It is something my wife mentioned to me this evening. Of course it doesn't amount to much, but it may lead to something. When Robert Smith came to the inn the night of the murder I paid very little attention to him, as I am not in the habit of giving a very close inspection to people who stop with me—and it was late when Smith came. But, as it happens, my wife noticed him a little more closely than I did. She declares that he was much below the medium in size, and that his hands were white and slender as if he had never done a day's work. Now this, taken in connection with the shabby working clothes he wore, might suggest that he was in disguise. What do you think?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Quigley, "you are right. I cannot get it out of my mind that the fellow had some connection with the murder."

"Nor I," assented Bartwell. "That is not all. My wife also noticed that the clothes he wore were ill-fitting, and that the slouch hat, which was an old one, was marked by a number of perforations in the crown—such as might have been done with a line punch—and so arranged as to form the letters J. H. or J. N. she was not positive which. It occurred to me that this information might be useful in tracing the mysterious Robert Smith."

"Sure thing," assented Quigley. "I thank you very much for telling me. This may lead to something. We have got to use every scrap of information at our disposal in getting a clew."

It was past eleven o'clock when Quigley retired, and for a long time he lay sleeplessly on his pillow, turning over in his mind what had been told him by Sears and the landlord of the inn. It was long past midnight when he fell asleep, and the sun was shining into his room when he awoke. When he had eaten his breakfast he found Paul Darrell waiting for him in the office.

CHAPTER X.
A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

"I'm going to drive over to Willow Creek again," Darrell said, "and I'd like for you to come with me."

"Anything doing?" asked Quigley.

"I'll tell you later. My buggy is at the door. Come on and let's be off while it's cool."

Quigley got some cigars and followed Darrell to the buggy. As they drove along the wooded road that ran northward from the town, Darrell turned to the reporter.

"I believe I am on the trail of the man that was with Mortimer Dent on Willow Creek," he said. "I was talking to a farmer that lives out in that locality, and he told me of seeing a man—a stranger—passing along the road just about daybreak on the morning following the night on which the murder was committed." He paused to light the cigar Quigley had given him.

Quigley remained silent, expectant, his mind swiftly turning to the story told to him by Thomas Sears. Could the man Darrell spoke of have been Sam Potter who had mysteriously disappeared?

"It is not a common thing to see strangers in that locality, so the farmer told me," continued Darrell. "It is far up in the hills, and the road is a mere trail leading into the wilds of the mountains. It struck me at once that this might be the man who was seen in camp with Dent."

"Did the farmer give you a description of him?" asked Quigley.

"No, he didn't. He said it was a little before five in the morning, and it was not light enough to get a good view of the stranger. All he could say was that the man was of medium size and walked swiftly on his way, never pausing to glance to the right or the left. You see, the little farm of Joe Buckley's—that is the farmer's name—lies right at the foot of the hills that cluster at the base of the mountains, and his is the last house for many miles on the road going north—in fact, there isn't another house, as far as I know, this side of the mountains. Just what the fellow could be doing there alone at that hour and going in the direction of the mountains, was what attracted the attention of Buckley. He was no tramp, for to all appearances he was well dressed, and he carried neither gun nor fishing tackle, so he could not have been a hunter, nor could he have been a fisherman."

"What are your plans? Do you expect to follow up the trail of the stranger and try to find out where he went?" Quigley asked.

"Yes; I thought of taking the same road and following it across the mountain. It is likely that we shall get trace of him in the settlement in the valley across the mountain, and if we can track him down, it is my opinion that the mystery of the murder of Mortimer Dent will be solved."

"By Jove! I hope so!" nodded Quigley. "I believe, as you do, that the stranger seen by Buckley was in some way connected with the affair. If we can trace him and find out his whereabouts an important point will be scored."

As they crossed Willow Creek and turned into a narrow trail leading into the hills, they saw a cart and horse standing near the stream. A man was seen through the willows slowly hobbling on crutches toward the vehicle. He carried a string of fish, and as he came into view Dennis Quigley recognized him.

"Good morning, Mr. Huddleson," he greeted, signaling Darrell to stop the buggy.

Huddleson paused abruptly and glanced at the speaker.

"How do you do, Mr. Quigley," he responded, cordially. "I didn't know you at first." He glanced at Quigley's companion. "Howdy, Darrell," he nodded. "Fine morning."

"A little warm," replied Darrell, "but fine for fishing, I dare say," he added, glancing at the string of fish.

"Oh, I've had pretty fair luck," said Huddleson. "It doesn't take much skill to catch fish just now, however. They bite at most anything. Going to try your luck?"

"Not at fishing," smiled Darrell. "We are merely taking a little drive into the hills. Mr. Quigley is from the city, and I'm giving him a little trip which might be labeled 'Seeing the Ozarks.' He's something of a naturalist."

Huddleson laughed.

"You'll not only see but you'll feel the Ozarks, if you take that road," he remarked; "that is, you'll be jolted into a pulp by the time you cross the mountain."

"I shouldn't wonder," smiled Quigley. "May I inquire if Miss Simmons is well this morning?" he added.

"Quite well, thank you," responded Huddleson. He dropped the string of fish into the cart and climbed in. "I wish you gentlemen a pleasant trip," he added, as he took up the lines.

"Thanks," responded Quigley. "We anticipate that the trip will afford more interest than pleasure."

"Then you can be considered a martyr to science," laughed Huddleson, as he turned into the trail. "Adios," and he drove down the trail.

Darrell and Quigley drove on in silence for a little time, the latter amazed and startled at what he had seen just at the moment Huddleson had turned into the trail. It set his mind in a giddy whirl, and for a moment he forgot everything else.

Huddleson wore a slouch hat, and as he turned, Quigley had seen a series of small perforations in the crown, and it required no second glance to read the letters "J. H." Quigley's mind reeled in a bewildering maze of perplexity and amazement. This was, without doubt, the hat worn by Robert Smith on the fatal night at the inn! This could mean but one thing, and that was that James Huddleson or some one connected with him, was implicated in the tragedy at the Black Bear.

Paul Darrell noticed the look of agitation on the face of Quigley and wondered what it could mean.

"When did you get acquainted with Huddleson?" he asked.

"Why, yesterday," replied Quigley.

"You never mentioned it to me."

"I did not think it worth while," Quigley explained. "I ran across his place while I was trying to get to the Fuller farm."

Darrell eyed the reporter critically.

"Look here, Quigley!" he cried, "you are keeping something from me! What is it?"

CHAPTER XI.
AMATEUR DETECTIVES.

"What do you mean?" asked Quigley.

"I could see very plainly that you were disturbed when we met Huddleson. Naturally, I was surprised."

"Why should I be disturbed?" Quigley demanded. "I never saw the man in my life till yesterday."

"That is no answer to my question," pursued Darrell. "Something—I don't know what, disturbed you. I could see it in your face as plainly as I could see your nose. Maybe it is none of my business. In that case I beg your pardon."

Although Darrell spoke with some animation, he looked smilingly into Quigley's face.

"I will confess that I made a little discovery that startled me," Quigley admitted, "but I haven't had time to think over the matter yet."

"Oh, take your time. I'm not trying to butt in, if it is something private."

"It isn't," asserted Quigley. "It is of very great interest to you and me right at this time." He paused a moment. "Have you ever been at Huddleson's place?" he asked abruptly.

"I never have. I merely know him when I see him. He is a strange sort of chap, though of agreeable personality when one happens to come in contact with him. No one about Mapleton knows anything about James Huddleson. He has lived there in that little secluded valley for years, but he doesn't seem to care for making acquaintances."

"Could you, in any way, associate him with the Dent murder affair?" Quigley asked, a thoughtful look on his countenance.

"I never once thought of him in that connection," Darrell replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Because something I saw a few moments ago connects him with the stranger—Robert Smith—who came to the Black Bear the night of the murder."

"Can that be possible?" cried Darrell. "By Jove! that is interesting!"

"Last night," went on Quigley, "while I sat on the porch just before retiring, Mr. Bartwell came out and told me that he had something to tell me that might prove of interest in regard to the murder case. He said that his wife had observed Robert Smith a little more closely than he had, and that she had noticed that his hands were slender and white and free from any signs of toil. Further, his clothes were evidently assumed as a disguise, and that they were ill-fitting. He wore a slouch hat which was marked with J. H. by a number of perforations in the crown." Quigley paused. "That hat, with the initials," he added, "I saw a few moments ago on the head of James Huddleson!"

Darrell uttered a little gasp and his face was flushed with excitement.

"Good God!" he cried. "Can this be true?"

"It seems impossible that there could be two hats so exactly alike in every respect," replied Quigley.

"There couldn't," declared Darrell.

"The question then is," resumed Quigley, "who was it that wore the hat to the Black Bear Inn that night?"

Darrell knit his brow in perplexed silence.

"It couldn't have been Huddleson himself?" he suggested, presently.

"Impossible!" objected Quigley. "He is crippled by rheumatism, and besides, his hands are not small and white."

Darrell nodded slowly.

"Exactly!" he said. "That is just what I was thinking. Who Robert Smith is and what became of him, is the question that remains to be solved. As you say, it could not have been Huddleson. But there is one point we have gained: Huddleson must know! It is hardly possible that the man could have borrowed his hat for the occasion and have returned it without the farmer's knowledge. You were at Huddleson's house yesterday. Did you see any one there besides the farmer and his wife?"

"No one—excepting—" Quigley paused. A sudden startled look came over his countenance.

"Excepting——?" queried Darrell.

"Excepting a young lady," finished Quigley, "Miss Bertha Simmons, the ward of Huddleson's."

The eyes of Darrell gleamed with a sudden fire of excitement. He reached over and struck Quigley on the shoulder with his open hand.

"By George! Can it be possible!" he cried.

Quigley turned and surveyed the station agent with a surprised scrutiny.

"What do you mean?" he faltered.

"Good God!" ejaculated Darrell. "Can't you see? Can't you understand that it was this girl that came to the inn disguised as a man!"

Quigley's face worked with emotion. He put out his hand in a protesting gesture.

"What stupid nonsense is this you are trying to get through your head?" he demanded. "Are you mad?"

Paul Darrell eyed his companion with amazement.

"No, I am not mad," he said, quietly. "It seems more likely that you are mad if you can't see the plausibility of my theory."

"Have you ever seen Miss Simmons?" Quigley asked.

"Never."

"Then you are not competent to judge."

"On the contrary, I am all the more competent, not being blinded by prejudice."

Quigley made an impatient gesture.

"Nonsense!" he cried. "How can you judge a person you have never seen?"

"Because the circumstances so direct. You have seen Miss Simmons?"

"I have, and no one who has seen her could think for a moment that she would go about the country masquerading in a man's attire."

Darrell was silent for a moment.

"You must remember," he said slowly, "that—to quote a well-known saying, 'In pursuit of justice none of us should see salvation,' or to be more explicit, it is the business of the true detective to allow no sentiment or emotion to turn him aside from the trail, no matter who may be implicated. As a rule, it is the one who is least suspected that is guilty."

"Rot—the most abominable rot!" ejaculated Quigley.

"Wait till I have finished," interposed Darrell. "You admit that you have seen the hat worn by Robert Smith on the night of the murder on the head of James Huddleson. Very well. We have agreed that the person seen at the inn wearing the hat was not Huddleson himself. Was it Mrs. Huddleson? She would not answer the description, as she is a woman of middle age. All evidence points, as I see it, to the girl. In making sport of this theory you show that you have not given the question fair consideration. You jump to a conclusion simply because of your prejudice. You have met Miss Simmons; you have perhaps been charmed by her presence; she is a young woman you cannot associate in any way with the crime committed at the Black Bear Inn. But all this has no bearing on the facts, nor does it contribute to prove that she was not there disguised as Robert Smith, for some reason, which is yet to be explained."

"I cannot accept you theory," Quigley declared. "But there is no reason for our disputing over it. We will investigate the matter later on. For the present we have quite enough to occupy our attention for the day."

Darrell nodded.

"Quite right," he said. "We should reach the valley across the mountain by noon. It should not take us long to find some trace of the stranger if he really passed that way."

"You have been there?" Quigley asked.

"I am fairly well acquainted with the people living in the little valley over the mountain," Darrell replied, "for I spent some weeks there visiting a friend about a year ago."

The road over the mountain was in keeping with what Huddleson had described, exceedingly rough, and the two travelers were greatly fatigued when at last they descended into the valley.

"The first thing on the docket," remarked Darrell, as he turned into a dim road leading to a farmhouse, "is to get something to eat."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEARCH.

The farmhouse toward which Quigley and Darrell drove was a wide, double-log structure, with rude porches on two sides almost covered with creeping vines which hung in festoons of flowers, giving the place a cool and inviting appearance.

"I am well acquainted with the family that lives here," said Darrell, "and we can depend on having a good dinner. Mrs. Merrill is one of those old-fashioned cooks who knows how to cater to one's appetite, and how to give that delicious brown to fried chicken that makes country life worth living."

Mr. Merrill was sitting on the porch in his shirt sleeves, and he came to the gate as the two drove up. He gave Darrell a warm greeting, and gave Quigley a cordial hand shake when the reporter was introduced.

"It's jist like you fellers from town ter drop round right at dinner time," Merrill laughed, as he slapped Darrell on the shoulder. "I believe you can smell fried chicken a half a mile."

"A great deal further than that," declared Darrell, "especially such as are served by Mrs. Merrill."

"Now I don't want any flattery," cried Mrs. Merrill, who came up to shake hands with Darrell. "If you begin that I shall know you have lightning rods or something like that to sell."

"I can assure you that no such calamity is likely to overtake you," laughed Darrell, as he introduced his friend. "I never sold anything that resembles a lightning rod in my life, and I am quite sure my friend here can say the same."

A boy came and took the horse to the stable while Quigley and Darrell followed the farmer and his wife to the house. There were some rustic seats on the porch and the farmer and his guests made themselves comfortable in these while they waited for dinner.

"We have bin wonderin' why you haven't bin over ter see us," remarked Merrill, turning to Darrell. "It is too hot ter work much, an' it does a feller good ter sort uv loaf around an' rest up. I ain't doin' a thing right now. Got my corn laid by an' the hay cut an' stacked, so if you're goin' ter stay a while I'll have time ter show you round."

"I'm afraid I can't stay long this time," said Darrell, regretfully, "though I'd like to. The fact is, Mr. Quigley and I drove over here on a little business and must start back within a few hours."

"Shucks!" exclaimed the farmer. "What's got you in sich a hurry all at once? You didn't used ter be that way. Better stay an' take a little vacation."

"I sure would like to stay," replied Darrell, "but this is one time when I can't."

"Want ter git back ter Mapleton, I reckon? What's all that talk about a man bein' killed there? Is there anything ter it?"

"Sure," nodded Darrell. "You read an account of it in the papers?"

"Yes. Have they found out who did it?"

"Not yet."

"An' ain't liable ter, I reckon."

"That remains to be seen. It is likely that he will be caught. There was a stranger seen in camp with Mortimer Dent before he came to Mapleton, and it is suspected that he had something to do with the murder."

"Who was the man?" asked Merrill.

"No one seems to know."

"Hasn't he bin found?"

"Not yet. But we think we have struck his trail. A man was seen passing Joe Buckley's farm about daybreak the morning after the murder was committed. He was a stranger and was on the road leading across the mountain in this direction."

"By gum! Can that be true?"

"Buckley saw the man himself. He was coming at a good pace, and he did not have the appearance of a tramp. What business could a stranger have, afoot and alone, at that time, traveling along that out-of-the-way road? We believe that this was the man who was with Mortimer Dent at the camp on Willow Creek, and we believe that he either had something to do with the crime or knows something about it."

"By Jenks, it looks that way!" declared the farmer. "An' are you out huntin' him?"

Darrell smiled.

"It gave me an excuse to drive over here, anyway," he admitted, "an' if we fail to run him down, I shall have had the pleasure of visiting you. What we want to find out is, if any stranger was seen in this neighborhood at the time mentioned."

Merrill shook his head.

"I don't think so," he said.

"But he must have come this way," insisted Darrell.

"Of course he might; I don't deny that, but it ain't likely that he could have passed this way an' no one seed him. It ain't often that a stranger comes this way, an' when one does, he's perty sure ter be noticed."

"I reasoned like this: The stranger having started on the road across the mountain would likely keep the road. He couldn't get across by any other route that I know of, and he surely came across or he would not have been likely to have started in this direction."

"But he might have stopped on the way," suggested Merrill.

"How is that?"

"Well, he might have stopped at the Sky Springs House," laughed Merrill. "It isn't very far from the road."

"I never thought of that," smiled Darrell. He bent his head forward in thought for a moment. Gradually a change came over his face. "By George, Merrill!" he cried, "there may be more in what you said than either of us thought at first."

"I believe ye're right, by Jenks!" ejaculated the farmer. "He might be hidin' there this blessed minute."

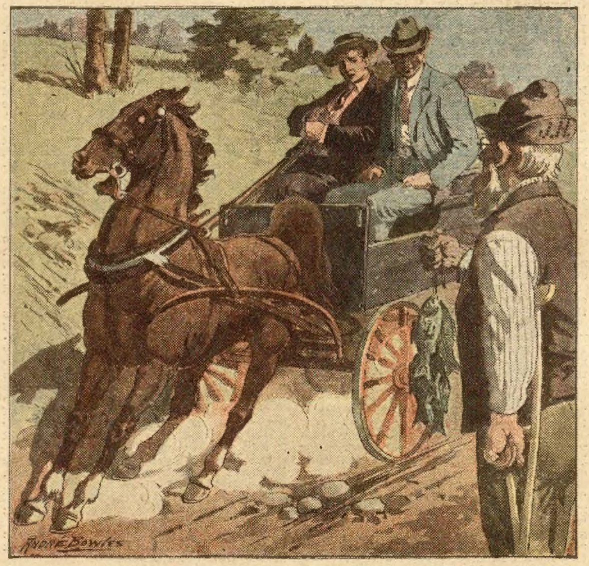
"It isn't impossible by any means," nodded Darrell. "But I never should have thought of it."

"I shall have to ask for enlightenment." remarked Quigley, who had listened to the dialogue in silence.

"You never heard uv the Sky Springs House, then?" Merrill asked.

"Not till you mentioned it," replied Quigley.

"The Sky Springs House," went on Merrill, "stands jist a little ways from the road you came this morning—a half mile or so down the slope of the mountain to the west. The place is looked on as a sort uv joke on the builder, who planned ter make a health resort out uv it. It was built by Colonel Spofford, uv St. Louis, an' cost a neat sum. It's built out uv stone took right out uv the mountain, an' has about thirty rooms. It was only one uv several sich buildings that he intended ter build if the proposition prospered, but it didn't. The big springs that come from under the mountain near the house wasn't the cure-all he had thought, an' people wouldn't come there fer their health er anything else. So the Sky Springs House was a failure, an' after hirin' a caretaker ter look after it fer a year or two, the Colonel shut the place up an' there it has stood ever since. It would make a first class place fer a feller ter hide in, but he'd starve if the ravens didn't feed him."


"Good morning, Mr. Huddleson."

"All the same a man might manage to hang up there for a good while if he was dodging the law," remarked Darrell. "As for something to eat, he might forage on the potato patches, the cornfields, and the chicken roosts about the valley here, and none be the wiser."

Merrill laughed softly.

"By Jenks, you town fellers know how it is done, I reckon," he chuckled, "Why," the feller might live as well as any uv us, if he had your head."

"I shouldn't be fool enough to starve if I were turned loose in such a place," asserted Darrell. "I guess it would do no harm if Mr. Quigley and I should stop and pay the Sky Springs a visit on our way back."

At this juncture the voice of Mrs. Merrill broke in on the conversation, announcing that dinner was ready.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. MERRILL'S PHILOSOPHY.

The dinner was fully up to Mrs. Merrill's standard of excellence and Dennis Quigley was quite positive that, though he had once been among the guests at a banquet, in Washington, given by a Western Senator of fabulous wealth, he had never eaten a meal that was quite so satisfying as the present one.

"Mrs. Merrill, you surely ought to be proud of an accomplishment that enables you to prepare such an array of good things to eat," he said. "I never before knew what the people of the city are missing."

"You deceitful flatterer!" cried Mrs. Merrill. "I am afraid you are even worse than Mr. Darrell."

"Young man," interposed the farmer, "this is what you city fellers would call an illusion. You never do anything ter git an appetite, an' now since ye've bin jolted across Sandy Mountain, ye're so hungry that you could eat hog an' corn bread an' swear it was fit for the gods."

"I shan't allow you to so impeach my veracity and slight the art of Mrs. Merrill!" protested Quigley, "and I am sure I have Mr. Darrell on my side."

"Sure thing," nodded Darrell. "You see we are all against you, Mr. Merrill, so you had as well be good."

It was not till after the meal was finished and the men were back on the porch that the conversation which had been interrupted by the call to dinner, was renewed.

"I was reading in the paper the other day," Merrill remarked, "that Colonel Spofford died a short time ago, an' I wonder what will be done with the Sky Springs House. He had no family, it seems, an' he left it ter a distant relative. I think the name was—let me see, yes it was Samuel Potter."

As he pronounced the name, the cigar which Quigley was in the act of lighting almost fell from his hand. Samuel Potter! That was the name of Mortimer Dent's cousin who had come to join Dent on Willow Creek! For a moment Quigley was too greatly amazed to speak. It was as if a sudden light had been switched on in the midst of darkness. That the missing Sam Potter had gone to the Sky Springs House now seemed to be settled beyond a doubt.

"I have bin wonderin'," went on Merrill, "if this man Potter will make any effort ter open the old hotel. I don't think he could ever make it pay 'less he built a railroad across the mountain, an' he couldn't do that, though one might be made under it."

An hour later Quigley and Darrell left the farmhouse and drove down to the crossroads near the creek, where there was a small store kept. The proprietor, a little man with a shock of red hair and a kind face was dozing on the porch when the visitors arrived. He got up from his easy chair, rubbed his eyes, and gave a cordial greeting to Quigley and Darrell. Quigley bought some cigars and passed one to the store-keeper.

"How's business?" Quigley asked, as the three took seats on the porch in front of the store.

"Pretty dull," replied the store-keeper. "The weather is pretty hot just how and people ain't doing much."

The conversation covered topics of general interest, and it was not till Quigley suggested that it was time to be off that the main object of stopping at the store was touched on. Quigley then inquired of the store-keeper if he had noticed any stranger passing that way on a certain day, and to the question the answer was in the negative. Very few strangers passed that way, the store-keeper said, especially at that season of the year. The visitors were about to take their departure when the store-keeper spoke again.

"The only stranger I have seen in these parts," he said, "was one that came here the other night—night before last or the night before that. I have reasons for remembering him, for he came very late —I think it was past midnight—and woke me up and said he was passing on a little jaunt among the hills and found himself in need of some provisions. I got up and opened the store, keeping a pretty close watch on him, as you may believe, not knowing but he might prove to be a robber. But he wasn't. He was a very polite, gentlemanly sort of chap, and after buying some coffee, tea, sugar and a few other articles, he insisted on giving me a dollar extra for troubling me after regular hours."

Quigley and Darrell exchanged meaning glances.

"Did the stranger have any one with him?" asked Quigley.

"No one that I saw."

"Did he have a team and conveyance of any kind?"

"I didn't see any if he had. He took the articles he had bought in a bag I gave him and went off up the road, and that was the last I saw of him."

"You mean that he went south—in the direction of the mountain road?" queried Darrell.

"Yes, sir."

"Could you describe him?"

"I don't know as I could very minutely. He appeared to be a man of some thirty-five or forty; rather good looking, with the air of a gentleman. More than that I could hardly say."

"He didn't give his name?"

"No sir. I did not ask him. Might I ask if you are looking for some one who has committed a crime?" added the store-keeper.

"Well, not exactly," replied Quigley. "We thought we might get trace of a certain person who was supposed to come this way, who could probably give some information about the murder case at Mapleton. I suppose you have read about it in the papers?"

"Yes—certainly. And nothing has been discovered that explained the mystery?"

"Not a thing."

"That's queer. Did they ever get track of the Robert Smith that stopped at the inn that night?"

"No—not that I have ever heard."

"It's a queer business. Like most people I have been studying the case, and though I don't know anything about any of those concerned, I have sometimes thought—but never mind. It is not right to speak of suspicions that may be absolutely absurd and unjust."

Quigley and his companion looked interested. Here was a man who had a theory. What was it? Both were anxious to know.

"It can do no harm to tell what your theory is," assured Quigley. "We all understand that one has a right to surmise or to propound theories about such cases. Every one likes to hear everybody else's theory."

The store-keeper laughed.

"I guess that is so," he agreed.

"Of course it is," nodded Darrell. "I have had a dozen theories since the crime was committed, and none of them amounted to anything."

At this all three joined in the laugh.

"Well, I was just going to say," went on the store-keeper, "that among all the theories set forth in the papers, not once have they mentioned the one that suggested itself to me. Of course you have both heard the landlord's story—Bartwell, I think his name is? Now, from my point of view his story is rather queer. It might be that the man Robert Smith is a myth; also the mysterious negro. Did it never occur to any one that this Mr. Bartwell might have committed the crime himself?"

The continuation of this remarkable story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year, and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

* * *

The Book Was Torn.

A year or two ago a Vermont town employed a trained superintendent, a college man who knew what a school ought to be, to exercise supervision over all the schools in that town. It was the first time some of those schools had ever been visited in an official capacity by a salaried administrative officer. In one school a toddler was found studying percentage, learning by heart.

"You should not teach him percentage," the superintendent said; "he does not know how to add and subtract."

"But I've got to," the teacher answered; "the front part of the 'rithmetic is torn out."

* * *

His Only Fault.

"Is your husband a good man?"

"Yes; he's a good man. I can't complain. But he always sneaks out the back way whenever the minister calls."

Their Reno Divorce Fund

By J. M. HEAD

"A wife of yours!"

I REALLY believe I love you, Jimmy. I have sounded my heart, and there does not appear to be any opposition there to your occupation."

Jimmy Blaisdell opened his arms, as though he would clasp the young girl in them, but she stepped back, away from the anticipated embrace, and put up a deprecating hand.

"One moment, Jimmy. You have known me long enough to understand that I am not like most other girls."

"Of that I am well aware," replied the love-sick youth, with a fervor which indicated that for him, she was the only girl in the world. "There is no other girl like you."

"That is your sentiment that speaks now, Jimmy. Of course, if you really love me, I am the one girl who is in your thoughts. But you do not understand just what I mean."

"No, and I don't care. I know you well enough to feel that I want you to be my wife——"

"Jimmy," interrupted the girl, solemnly, "I am afraid of marriages."

"That's nothing," he laughed lightly; "every girl is. So am I, but I love you well enough to face the danger."

"Oh, indeed," and the girl arched her eyebrows. "Am I such a threatening evil?"

"Now, Madge," he protested, "you know that you are not; but you know that every marriage is a lottery. I am certain that I will draw a prize when I get you, and I wouldn't have mentioned being afraid if you hadn't suggested it."

"Jimmy, you're too acquiescent," said the girl, but she was plainly mollified by his retraction. "You accede to what I wish too quickly."

"Do you want me to oppose you?"

"Goodness, no. But I am told that men who do everything that a girl wants them to do before marriage, are not so likely to continue in that blissful attitude after they are husbands."

"Some old misogamist told you that," growled Jimmy.

"No, it was a woman who knows. But I don't want to argue with you, Jimmy. I have told you that I have some peculiar notions, and you have seemed to understand that I have; though, goodness knows I don't know where I have given you the slightest provocation for such a thought. Still, we'll not say anything more about that. I'm peculiar, and I have one idea in mind, which I want carried out, if I marry you."

"Have any idea you want, Madge," said the young man, moving toward her; "only marry me."

"Wait; not yet, Jimmy," and the young girl dodged him again. "When you hear what I have to say, perhaps you will change your mind about wanting to marry me. Now, please don't interrupt me. You sit down in that chair, and I'll sit in this one, a respectable distance away from you, and tell you what my plan is."

Obediently the man seated himself in the indicated chair, and contained himself as best he could. The girl perched gracefully on the arm of the chair which had stood beside her. She looked sweet to Jimmy, with her brown hair waving around her head, her brown eyes sparkling, her red lips parted to show her pretty teeth.

"Jimmy," and the tone was almost sepulchral, "I will marry you on one condition. Now don't speak. I don't want any more protestations. I know already that you would die for me; but I don't care for dead men, even though they are as nice as Jimmy Blaisdell. I never will marry until I have enough money to secure a divorce."

"Madge!" shouted the man.

"Calm yourself, Jimmy. You know that people who have thought they loved each other as much as we think we do have been divorced. Just now I don't want to be divorced from you, because, because—well, just because I—that's enough for you to know. But no one knows what is going to happen. Suppose we were married——"

"Ah!" sighed the man.

"Quit your groaning, and be serious."

"I am serious, Madge; I was never more so in my life."

"Then keep still and don't interrupt me. I have said that I want enough money for a divorce after I am married. The uncertainties of married life are awful. You might do such things that I do not now dream of. You might even beat me." She shivered, and the young man grunted protestingly.

"Well, you might. Think of your beating me. Why, I couldn't endure it."

"Neither could I."

"Hush, don't speak again. You are disobeying me already. Suppose you should beat me, and I wanted to get a divorce from you. I would have to pay a lawyer, and court fees, and witness fees, and oh, I don't know what other things, and the only way I could get money would be to ask you for it. And I would die before I'd ask you for money to get a divorce from you."

"And I'd die before you'd get it!" cried the young man, with devotion.

"Interrupting again. If you don't keep still, I'll never be your wife."

At this dire threat the young man closed his lips and held them tight with his hand.

"That's better; keep your hand there. Now, this is what I am going to do. I have about three hundred dollars saved, already. I must have at least two hundred more, and it will take me two years to save it out of my salary. When I have the two hundred dollars I'll marry you."

"I'll get it for you."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. You'll need your money, for you must have a divorce fund as well."

"But I don't want one. I'll make enough money to get a divorce if I feel that I really can't live without one."

"And take the money which belongs to your wife and— and family?" She blushed violently. Recovering her composure, she went on. "You can't have that money. You'll have to have it before we are married."

Jimmy did not reply, though the girl was plainly waiting for him to say something.

"Well, you must have a fund for a divorce, the same as I have. Now, how long will it take you to save five hundred dollars?"

Jimmy made a mental calculation. "That's a lot of money, Madge, for a young man who wants nothing else in this world so much as to get married to the girl he loves. Why, if I had that money all at one time, I wouldn't know what to do with it."

"I always told you you were improvident, Jimmy. You know, though, that you have more than that saved now. Of course, you can't touch that. That's for us. You have to save this money. If you can save five dollars every week, you can have the money in two years."

"Look here, Madge," said the man, "do you mean to tell me that I can't marry you for two years?"

"Well, maybe you can save the money sooner."

"I can't. The interest on my bonds is not being paid regularly, and I'm afraid that the Standard Oil Company is going to compel me to begin foreclosure proceedings."

"James," said the girl solemnly, "you are jesting. This is a serious matter."

"But I can't save that money inside of two years, and I'm not going to wait all that time for a wife," protested the lover.

"A wife! That indefinite article suggests that you might find somebody else, in case I refused you."

"Honestly, no, Madge. You are the only one I want."

"Oh, yes, that's what they all say. But," and there was resignation in her tone, "the woman always must suffer. I don't complain. I'll compromise with you, as the woman must always do. I'll make it a year. I'll save another hundred, and that will give me four hundred dollars, while you will have two hundred and fifty. We'll put this money in the bank the day we are married. Then if I want a divorce, I'll take my money and go to Reno, and get my divorce."

"Madge, this is foolish."

"On the contrary, it is the wisest thing I ever did. I'll not be tied down to any man simply because I can't get money enough to pay for divorce proceedings—not even to you."

"Please, Madge," began the man, but she stopped him.

"That is my ultimatum. It's final. One year from today, if you have the two hundred and fifty dollars, and I have my four hundred, for the Reno fund, we will be married. And now, Jimmy," she said condescendingly, though there was a flush on her cheek, and her breath was not exactly regular in its respiration, "you may kiss me, if you want to."

Jimmy grabbed her, as soon as the words were out of her mouth, and the way he tousled her hair, and crumpled her shirtwaist indicated that he did not care even if he did have to wait a year, if he could have this privilege during the engagement period.

* * * * * *

The year passed quickly. Jimmy was in heaven most of the time, and the burden that was imposed on him did not seem so heavy. Out of his salary as a reporter on the Tribune, he was able, by skimping, to save five dollars each week. With Madge, it was a little harder, for she found that her salary as stenographer in the big wholesale dry goods house of Meadows & Co., was not sufficient for all her needs, and at the same time admit of her saving for her Reno fund, without imposing some hardship on herself, without causing her to deny herself some of the small luxuries which she formerly had enjoyed. But she was determined, and never once did she fail to put away the two dollars, which meant so much, potentially, to her.

The end of the year at last arrived. Madge counted her money, or rather she figured up her bank book and found that she had a little more than four hundred dollars. Jimmy, by dint of keeping himself to the task, had saved his five dollars each week, so that he had two hundred and sixty dollars.

He carried his savings bank book to Madge, with an air which suggested that he, having kept his part of the contract, expected her to keep hers, and give herself to him.

Madge did not hesitate. She had given her word, she loved Jimmy, the Reno funds were ready, and why should they not be married?

And married they were. Happiness followed them into their little flat, from the honeymoon trip, and lived with them, and shadowed them, and the two young people wondered how they ever had lived without each other.

"Darling," said Jimmy, one night, as they sat on a couch in the small living room, and he held her close to him, kissing her as he had done so many, many times, "what about our Reno fund? We have been married six months, and there have been no such misunderstandings between us such as would lead us to expect that there ever will be need of using this money for the purposes for which it was saved. Suppose we divert it into the general fund."

"No, Jimmy," answered his wife; "we have not lived a married life very long. There is plenty of time for us to quarrel. Of course, we don't want to, but then if we do, we have the fund to fall back upon. We must never touch it."

"Pshaw, Madge, there are many things which we should have, and which that money would furnish us."

"Not a word more," answered Madge, rather imperiously, he thought. "That fund is sacred."

And so Jimmy dismissed the subject.

The call for the Reno fund came sooner than Jimmy had expected. It came so suddenly that it left him dazed and blinking, at the wide open door through which he saw the form of his wife passing. It came, as he thought, on very slight provocation, and it came with their first real quarrel.

Jimmy had been assigned to a mystery case, and he had been compelled to work so late that he telephoned to his wife that he would not be able to get home before sometime in the morning. Jimmy usually made it a point to be home by two o'clock in the morning, at the latest, but the clews on which he was working led him to a remote part of the city, and when he got back to the office, it was necessary for him to write a short story. He did not have time to elaborate on the story, for the last edition was almost ready for the press, and the night editor held the forms simply to get Jimmy's story into the paper. On the order of the city editor, however, Jimmy was compelled to write a four-column story, going into full detail, and this was to be featured in the paper in an extra edition. It was four o'clock when Jimmy finished, and as is was a cold, drizzly morning, in early May, the tired reporter decided that he would stay downtown at a hotel. He had previously telephoned to his wife that he would be kept unusually late, and for her not to expect him.

Jimmy threw himself into the bed at the hotel, wrapped himself in the quilts, and was immediately in a sound and blissful slumber. He had left no call, and when he awoke and looked at his watch, he was astonished to see that it was nearly noon. He would have only a short time to get home, cheer up his wife, and return for duty that afternoon.

The car soon took Jimmy close to his flat. He hurried up the steps of the apartment building, climbed to the third floor, and entered his little home.

Madge was seated by the window as he came in.

"Hello, sweetheart," he cried, and rushing over to her placed his arms around her, and kissed her soundly on the cheek.

His wife did not respond to his show of affection. She did not attempt to return his caress. She simply sat passive, and said, in a calm voice:

"Oh, you have finally come home, have you?"

"Why, of course I have come home. What else would I do?"

"It seems to me that you must have had a slow car, when it took you from four o'clock till nearly twelve to reach your home." The tone of his wife's voice was coldly severe.

"Why, my little frau, I went to the hotel. I was so tired out that I simply did not feel like taking that long, cold, wet ride. You are not angry are you, sweetheart?"

"Oh, no, of course not. You can stay downtown, supposedly at work, and where the lights are bright, and everything is cheerful, and leave your wife at home, in a stuffy flat, wondering what had become of you."

"But, dearie, I 'phoned to you that I would not be home till late."

"And you kept your word," incisively. "Twelve o'clock is late. This, I suppose is only the beginning of what all married men eventually do. It isn't enough that I am left here, in this lonely flat, till two o'clock every morning, but you must finally, after we have been married six months—oh, how long it seems now—come in at noon. I suppose your companions are still sleeping off their carouse."

"Why, Madge, dear, you surprise me. There has been no carouse. You must have known, if you called the office, that I worked till four o'clock, and you can read my story in the 'extra.' If you doubt my word about staying at the hotel, you may call up the clerk, and find if I was not registered there."

"Oh, yes, call the clerk, indeed! Of course you would cover your tracks. You probably have fixed it with him, to lie for you."

"Madge!"

The commanding tone did not deter the young woman.

"Oh, your loud voice can't scare me. Go on; yell at me as much as you want to. The next thing you'll do, I suppose, is to strike me."

"Madge, dear, you are raving."

"I'm not raving half as much as I should. You know that you have treated me shamefully. You might have called me from the hotel, at least. You have begun your career of dissipation, at last, but it will end so far as it can affect me, here and now. I expected nothing more when you came in, than to have you pick a quarrel with me, and I have received my expectations."

Jimmy looked desperate. He never had heard a woman go on in this manner, and he was at a loss just what to say. Finally he spoke up.

"Why, Madge, I haven't picked a quarrel. If there is any, you have started it."

"The woman is to blame of course," snapped his wife. "She always is. I thought you would be chivalrous enough in a case like this to refrain from placing the censure on me, but I see that you are no better than the rest of the men."

"Madge, Madge, this is folly."

"No, this is sense," she cried springing up. "You thought that once you had me, you could do as you pleased. You thought you could abuse me, and that I would endure it; but you forgot that I was prepared for just such an emergency."

"Prepared, Madge; what do you mean?"

"You forgot that there is my Reno fund to fall back on."

"Madge!" cried the young husband. "You don't mean that——"

"Yes, I do. I'm through with you. I'm going to take the night train for Reno. I have telephoned for my ticket and my berth, and when next you see me, if you ever do, I'll be free from you."

"Great God, Madge! You surely cannot mean to try for a divorce on such slight grounds."

"Slight! When a man stays away from his home all night, and leaves his wife all alone, and then does not even offer an apology. When he stays out, with goodness knows whom, and then comes home without a sign of contrition, you call it slight. My mind is made up. James Blaisdell, you will look on your wife for the last time, today."

"But, Madge," and the young man's lips trembled a little, and he looked at her helplessly. "Think what you are doing. Think what this step means."

"I have thought; I have thought all night, and the more I thought, the more determined I became. Oh, if I only had a brother, you would not dare to treat me this way!"

Jimmy was slow to anger, but his wife's unreasonableness finally aroused him. He could not feel he had been guilty of such an awful offense. Madge was simply beside herself, and a few sharp words might bring her to her senses.

"Very well," he said, slowly. "If you want to leave a husband who has taken every care of you, who has worked till late into the mornings for your comfort and welfare, who has tramped through rain and cold, all night long, trying to do his duty to his employers, and all for you, then you may go. But, remember, if you leave this house, you go never to return. You take the responsibility of your most unreasonable action on your own shoulders. Once you are out of this house, on this senseless trip, you are no longer a wife of mine."

"A wife of yours! That is surely no great existence. There were plenty of men whom I could have married, who never would have left me alone at night. A wife of yours! My, how big we are! If I ever thought I'd be so lacking in spirit as even to want to be a wife of yours, after the outrageous manner in which you have treated me, I'd lose all self-respect. You are simply wasting your time talking to me. I want to be free. The atmosphere of this flat stifles me."

She stalked across the floor, threw open a closet, hauled out a suitcase, and set in on the floor. Next, she seized a hat, and slapped it on her head, jabbing the hat pins in viciously. Then she threw on a walking coat, and she was ready for the street.

The husband watched her in silence. He did not attempt to stop her. He felt outraged, himself, that Madge could take such umbrage at what he had done, and as his anger grew, he felt as though he could never be the same to her again as he once had been, even should she change her mind.

Did Madge expect that he might recall her, as she stepped over the threshold of the door? It is certain that she hesitated a moment, but no word came from Jimmy, who stood watching her, angry and hurt. Then, she passed on, toward the stairway, a little uncertainly, perhaps, and out of his sight.

* * * * * *

Jimmy worked that night as he never had worked before. The mystery on which he had been assigned had grown deeper, the public was thrillingly interested in it, and as Jimmy wrote he wove into the story all the romance of which he was capable. He was determined that his wife should know that her going had not cast him into utter despondency. He was determined that he would forget her, and he worked so feverishly that he was almost sick, when he had finished.

He had left word with the switchboard operator to call him the moment there was a telephone message from his wife, and while he tried to think that he didn't care, he knew that it was only a huge bluff, and that he was eating his heart out, at the thought of her being away from him, on that long ride, bent on a mission that would mean only unhappiness to both of them. Until the time for the train to leave had arrived, he had hoped, deep in his heart, that she would call him on the 'phone, but after he knew that the train actually had gone, he felt lost. His work finished, he called his house by telephone, thinking that she might have relented and gone home, but there was no answer to the ringing of the bell. He could not bear to think of going home that night, and so he wended his way to the hotel where he had stayed the night before, registered and went wearily to his room.

All night long he tossed and tumbled in his bed, and he arose the next morning with a headache and a temper that caused him to snap at the waitress in the restaurant because his bacon lacked one of having what he considered the correct number of lean streaks,. He answered the salutation of the cashier, with whom he usually was glad to chat, with a surly response, which made the receiver of money whistle, and say, "Gee, I wonder what's eatin' Jimmy this mornin'."

He entered the city editor's room that afternoon, with the most magnificent grouch that he had ever had. Usually pleasant and genial, he answered questions which were put to him in monosyllabic grunts. He received his assignment on the mystery case with a disapproval that did not fail to catch the attention of the city editor, and even though Jimmy was the star reporter, his superior could not refrain from remarking:

"You don't act as though you liked this job, Blaisdell. If you don't, all you have to do is to say so. I think we can find some one else who will do the work."

"Oh, I don't mind the assignment, Wilson," Jimmy answered. "I am out of sorts today, and if it were not that I had been handling this story, I'd beg a day off."

"Something wrong, Jimmy?"

"Oh, no, nothing particular; that is nothing that I can't get over in a hurry," and he started out to work on a new line of evidence which he had discovered the night before.

He failed signally. He lost the greatest feature of the entire story that day, and was beautifully "scooped" by the rival papers. For this he was "called" hard by the city editor, and was then "placed on the carpet," which is a term indicating that the managing editor had seen fit to note his failure, and had taken him to task for it.

"You have been one of my best men, Blaisdell," said the managing editor, "and I have always felt that I could intrust you with the most important stories, but you know that you have fallen down on this one, and let every other paper in town give us the laugh. It is only out of consideration for the fact that you have rendered good service in the past, that I do not let you go. I believe that there is something wrong with you. I never have known you to drink to excess, but your actions are a little suspicious, and I would suggest that you take a lay off for a couple of days, and brace up."

"I'm not drinking, have not been drinking, and don't think I will drink," was Jimmy's rather sharp answer. "Perhaps you are justified in threatening me with discharge, and the way I feel now I don't much care. A man may serve his paper all his life, and then make one slip, and the whole darned newspaper building is ready to tumble about his shoulders. I am out of sorts, it is true, and I know that I have failed dismally on that story, when you had reason to believe that I would make good. If you feel like giving me a 'lay off,' without pay, I'll take it, and use it to get my wits together again."

"Something's wrong, Blaisdell," commented the managing editor. "Would you care to let me know?"

In a burst of confidence, Jimmy told the whole story to his chief. The latter offered various suggestions, all of which Jimmy accepted with thanks, but felt that they were of no value. The "Old Man" ended by saying:

"Take a week off, if you want it Blaisdell, and your pay will go one just the same. I do not wonder that your work fell off. Women are queer creatures, but we must have them. Let me know how this comes out."

Jimmy went back to his desk, to clean up some odds and ends, and found there a message. He opened it in haste, tearing it in two as he did so. The combined parts revealed the following:

"Reached Reno. Decree in a week—Madge."

Then the bottom fell out of everything, and Jimmy found himself reeling like a drunken man. He finally managed to sink into his chair, and to throw his head back, so that his senses returned. He clutched the message in his hand, and read it again and again. Luckily none of the other reporters happened to be near him, or his strange actions might have caused them to ask questions. He picked up the things that he wanted, and slowly walking out of the office, went to the nearest sample room, and took three or four big drinks of whisky, before boarding a car for home.

The loneliest thing on earth is a deserted home. To the one who is left, every article in the house speaks of the one who is gone. Like a wraith, Jimmy tiptoed through the rooms of the little flat, and everything his eyes rested on suggested Madge. He took a little deposit book out of his pocket, and smiled bitterly as he opened it, and saw entered there "1-12—$250.00." It was his Reno fund. For a moment a wild desire to draw out the money, and go on a liquid orgy took possession of him, but Jimmy had always been a rather decent sort of fellow, and he could not bring himself to the point where he could abandon his respectability. He knew that it could be followed only by still greater regret, and he choked down the suggestion. He picked up a book and tried to read, but threw it down in disgust. He paced back and forth through the rooms, and tried to forget Madge, but it was no use; he saw her smiling face, as it used to look, her piquant attitude of command, and he saw her hesitating action, as she walked out of the door, and he cursed himself that he had not tried to call her back.

For two days Jimmy knew not what he did. He walked the streets, he played pool with some of the boys, he smoked a hundred big black cigars, but he could not regain his composure.

On returning home one night, he found a letter. It was addressed to him in Madge's dear handwriting. He took up the envelope and looked at it, afraid to open it. He felt that the news of their legal separation was contained in it, and he hardly had the courage to meet this actual knowledge. For a half-hour he held the sealed letter. Then, with a desperate effort, he tore open the envelope, and unfolded the missive.

"What's this?" he murmured, the frown which had been on his brow for days relaxing. A smile came over his features, and suddenly he burst into a laugh.

This is what he read:

"Reno, July 13, 1910.

"Dear Jimmy:—I did not think when I left you, that I would ever have to call on you again for help. I wanted to be free, but maybe I've made a mistake. I need money, for I am practically stranded. My Reno fund is almost gone. I gave two hundred dollars to my lawyer, and believing I would have to make my own way in the world, hereafter, I invested two hundred more in a mining stock deal, giving the money to a man who represented himself as the fiscal agent of the 'Great Bonanza' gold mine. I have been told since that it is a wildcat, and my stock is worth nothing.

"Jimmy, I was wrong. I don't want a divorce, and I have been miserable ever since I left you. I have cried until there are no more tears left. Do you want me to come back? If you do, send me the money, and when I get home, I'll be the most contrite little woman you ever knew. I am humbling myself because I know that I acted like a little fool. If you don't want me again, I don't know what I shall do.

"Your sorrowful wife (?),
"MADGE."

"Poor little girl," sighed Jimmy, after he had laughed in sheer joy. "It must have been a bitter thing for her to acknowledge that she was wrong. Will I send her the money? Well you just watch me."

As quickly as he could get to the bank, he had the two hundred and fifty dollars which constituted his Reno fund. As soon as he could reach the telegraph office, he had wired that amount to his wife along with the message: "Come as soon as you can. Forget all about the Reno fund."

Two days later his wife threw herself into his arms, at the Northwestern station.

"Oh, Jimmy, I'm so glad to get back," she sobbed. "I never want to leave you again."

"And you never will, if I can help it," gulped Jimmy. "Both our Reno funds are gone, and there will be nothing left to tempt us."

In a week things had settled down again to the normal. Madge was in possession of the home, and Jimmy was happy. Then a strange event occurred.

One afternoon, before Jimmy had started for the office, there was a ring at the door. Jimmy went to it, and saw a man, well dressed and of prepossessing appearance.

"For the love of Mike, where did you come from?" he shouted. "Come right in, Jack."

It was Jack Northrup, an old friend of Jimmy's.

"This is Mr. James Blaisdell, is it not?" asked Northrup, gravely, as soon as he had entered.

"Quit your kidding, Jack. Wait, and I'll bring my wife in to meet you."

"I have met her."

"What!"

"Yes, at Reno; I was her attorney."

"Well, what do you know about that?" exclaimed Jimmy, slangily. "You her attorney?"

"Yes; I want to see her."

Jimmy called Madge in. At sight of the lawyer she drew back, but he reassured her.

"Mrs. Blaisdell, I am very glad to meet you again in your own home. Jimmy, when your wife came to me, I soon found out the whole trouble, and I knew that there was a big mistake, and that you would both be sorry if she obtained a divorce. I charged her two hundred dollars, and am here to return the money."

"Oh!" gasped Madge.

"Furthermore, I got one of my friends to have her invest most of the balance of her Reno fund, of which she had told me, in the 'Great Bonanza' mining stock, and then told her that it was worthless. As a matter of fact, they have struck ore in that mine, and the stock is worth just double what she paid for it."

"Hurray!" cried Jimmy, getting up and grabbing his wife and whirling her around the room. "Jack, you're a brick. I never did think much of that confounded Reno fund, but now I believe it was a good investment, thanks to you. But you must take part of this money for your trouble. In fact, if you take it all, I won't say a word."

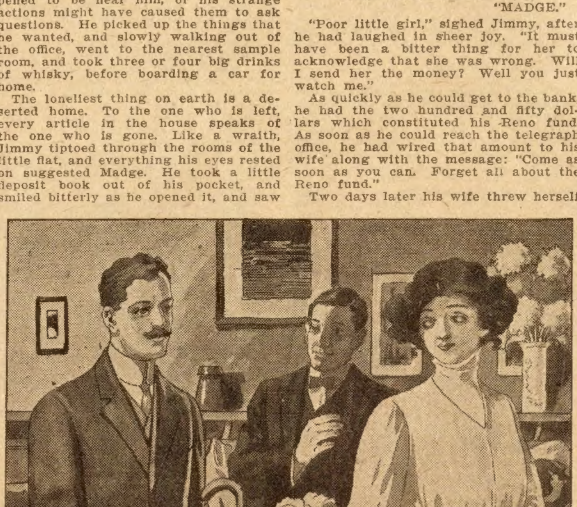
"Not a penny, Jimmy. I have a fair fortune now, and I don't need it. I am on my way East, to marry a little girl, whom I have know for some years, and, if she ever got into such a mess as your wife did, I would want some friend of mine to help her out."

Jimmy grasped his hand, and held it as in a vise.

"God bless you, Jack," and there were tears in his eyes. "You have done more for me and my wife than I ever thought any man would do. And above all, you have settled that Reno fund, once and for all. It goes into the general fund, doesn't it, Madge?"

And with shining eyes, the young wife answered:

"It does, Jimmy; it does."



"Oh!" gasped Madge.

* * *

Much More Important.

The ready wit of the late Eugene F. Ware, author of "The Washerwoman's Song" and other poems, is shown in the following story.

He was giving a dinner at his home in Kansas City, Kan., the place to which he had retired after he resigned from the office of Pension Commissioner at Washington, under Roosevelt.

The guests were equally divided between Missourians, from the twin city across the line, and Kansas. All present had imbibed the spirit of their genial, humorous host.

Said a Missourian, "You Kansans always have your brass bands going and your flags flying. We, from Missouri, get tired of your cock-sureness. Tell me, what have you decided about the hen, for instance, does she sit or does she set?"

"We don't bother about things like that," flashed Ware. "What concerns us, when she cackles, is, has she laid or has she lied?"

* * *

A Real Treasure.

After addressing a woman's cooking club, a famous lecturer was besieged by the members, who questioned him about his own household and about his kitchen in particular.

"Are you satisfied with your cook?" some one asked him.

"Yes, indeed," was the reply.

"Is she economical?"

"Very."

"Can she bake pies and bread?"

"The best in the land."

"Is she neat about her work?"

"As tidy as a pin and as attractive in appearance as one would care to see."

"How about her disposition?"

"I think it is about perfect."

"Huh!" exclaimed one of the matrons, who had been having trouble with her cook. "It's a wonder you don't marry the girl."

"That's exactly what I did. My wife does her own cooking."

The Detective Barrier;

Or, HOW AND WHY

By WM. H. MANNING

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CHAPTER IV.

BEWILDERING FOOTPRINTS.

BARFORD had no intention of showing himself. Curious as he was to know what Miss Belden wanted in the shack, and what she would do when there, the checks upon his movements were more than offset by desire to watch Thomson and weigh his conduct. If the rival detective had a clew it might possibly develop for Barford's benefit.

Thomson's eyes were glued upon the shack, and he ran forward with quick, light steps.

"Looking for a peep-hole to spy upon Kendall's housekeeper," said Netley. "There should be plenty of cracks in the wall— ah! he has found one. Now, then, he has the lady under survey. Wonder what he sees, anyhow?"

"Unless she is after some article hidden there, neither she nor Thomson will advance greatly in their game," replied Barford. "That shack has been looked to by us, and it is not shouting any secrets."

"Ten to one Thomson will have only his labor for his pains."

Hovering in their hiding-place, the outsiders in the drama waited five minutes, and then Thomson stepped back and dropped into the cover of neighboring bushes. Kendall's housekeeper appeared, stood near the door, inactive, silent, and, it seemed, in deep thought. Then she turned and walked slowly back in the way she had come. It was a fair surmise that she had found nothing, but whether this was a disappointment or a pleasure was not clear.

When she had gone a safe distance Thomson rose, looked about him and himself entered the shack.

Barford stood still, gazing after the housekeeper. He was vastly curious to know why that shanty was a magnet to draw so many persons, especially well-dressed citizens. What interest could they have in individuals who wore stumpy shoes and slept in so wretched a place? It was certain that Miss Belden had not expected to find anybody there, so why had she come? Was it to make sure that no betraying evidence was scattered around?

Ten minutes later Thomson reappeared and walked slowly toward the village, his head bent in deep thought. It was not until then his rival realized that Netley had left him. That useful man came back soft-footed as usual.

"I slipped along and watched Thomson while he was inside," was the explanation. "The lad did some critical looking, but the wrinkles in his forehead indicated that he did not know what he expected to find. Deduction, he only looked because Martha had been there."

"Enticing Martha! She lures me, too. We will see her."

"Now?"

"As soon as her mind has thrown off its cyclonic touch. By all means, let her get calm. Netley, we are looking up. We have two women already marked as in the game—not to mention the stumpy-footed lady—and things are surely in good trim. Unluckily, neither of the two we have seen has red hair. Slowly, my impatient sir, we don't want to overtake either Miss Belden or Thomson."

They moderated their pace and were nearing the first of the town houses when Barford stopped short. Netley saw him staring at the ground and himself looked the same way.

"Somebody has had a fire here," pursued the assistant.

"Right! Not a campfire nor one for cooking, for it would not heat a stray mosquito seriously. Merely a little blaze fed by leaves and twigs. Who built it here?"

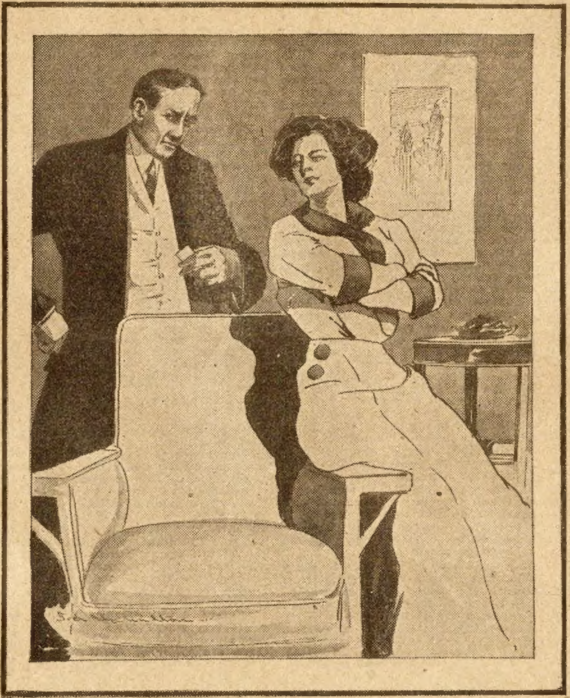
"Boys, at play, do you think? It's too small for any useful purpose, as you say——"

Netley stopped speaking as his superior dropped upon his knees and bent over the little charred mass. Barford thrust his hand into the heap, brushed aside a part with infinite care, slipped his fingers under another section and raised it slowly.

"What do you make of that?" he asked.

"Looks like a burned piece of paper."

"Exactly! A slip of paper an inch square. Now we know why the fire was lighted. It was to destroy the paper. The device was successful, except that this bit did not go to pulverized ashes. Look sharper, Netley! Burned as it is, the discolored lines of a few letters remain, as is often the case. Read!"



"I don't know a thing that happened last night!"

"L-e-t, let," the assistant read.

"L-e-t, let!" Barford agreed. "Begins with a capital, too. Can't be Harden Kendall's name—who did you say was the charming young lady you trailed to the village?"

"Docia Lettington."

"Ah, Lettington! L-e-t, Let!"

Netley said something, but his superior was intent on the scrap. Its brevity was exasperating, for it might be anything but what he had guessed. When he shifted his gaze it was to scan the heap of ashes sharply, but the keenest survey failed to show more reading matter.

"This," he said presently, "may be much ado about nothing. As you have pointed out, boys may have made the fire, but my ideas don't run that way. Do you see these marks?" and he indicated with a pointing foot.

"I see what you mean, but—I don't know what to call the marks."

"Let's try to find out. Circle a few rods for footprints."

They hunted, and evidence fell into line rather readily. "I don't know about that fire!" suddenly exclaimed Netley, "but it's a fact that two persons came racing through the timber from the direction of the shacks, and, by Jupiter! they wore stumpy shoes. They were the parties who tracked around the shack."

"Yes," Barford agreed, thoughtfully. "They came running, but why? There is not a third set of tracks back there. The question presses, was the fire alight when they ran? Maybe the fire was made since, yes, even days since. Those marks by the ashes——"

He walked to the spot and stood looking in deep perplexity. What he saw aroused all his interest and curiosity, but it carried a mystery too deep for comprehension.

"Somebody," he murmured, as if to himself, "tried to kick out the little blaze, and, in so doing, scuffed the earth alongside, but what a foot! It was not bare, nor shod with boot, shoe or slipper. What a foot! A horse, gently pawing, might almost make such marks—but no horse was here. Get awake, Netley! Trails have two ends, or should have. Let us see what lies beyond. Ah, the trail continues toward the village."

They found the tracks of the two stumpy-footed persons easily, and they had still been running swiftly, but there was nothing more. The last of the trees was passed and a field lay beyond. Nearest to the detectives was a narrow plowed strip, and turf just beyond. After that came the houses, though they were beyond the fall of a slight bluff.

"That mellow soil!" Barford exclaimed. "It has been harrowed for the summer crop, and, of course, lately. All depends upon whether the harrowing was before or after—it was before, Netley, before! See, we get the tracks of the two runners——"

"And something more."

"Something more, Netley! They were not running for their health, but in pursuit of somebody—or something. Here we have a third line of tracks. Who—or what—made them?"

"I've never seen such tracks before. Not made by bare feet, nor by feet equipped with shoes. No leather on those feet. Why, an elephant might make just such footprints, though, of course, nowhere so small. They lack but little of being square."

Barford stood still again and looked. He had signs before him, but they were dumb and he was deaf in the presence of a puzzle new in his experience. Netley's thoughts went back to the man who had skulked up to the shack in his stockinged feet, but no foot thus covered could make tracks like those before them. To compare the two impressed him as absurd, so he said nothing about stockings.

Barford took his time and saw everything. The three running persons had crossed the plowed strip almost as direct as the flight of an arrow, but when the turf was reached all evidence ended.

The detective finally abandoned the search, but the fact that he did so without comment was proof to Netley that he was thoroughly mystified. Wondering whether human being or beast had made the marks, Netley felt like echoing his superior's exclamation—"What tracks, what tracks!"

Barford was not long depressed, and as they passed over the little height of land and saw a citizen at work in his garden the leader advanced and smiled genially. Remarking that he had a garden of his own, he talked spring planting with the stranger and presently led talk into the desired channel.

"Do you own this land?" he asked.

"Only this bit and the strip back of here. I plant enough potatoes there for my own use. Just had it plowed, and yesterday it was harrowed. I'll give the earth two days to dry and warm, and begin putting in my crop right afterwards."

Five minutes later the officers resumed their way.

"Harrowed yesterday," said Barford. "That means that the footprints were made last night. The two people from the shack chased somebody or something who did not wear boot, shoe, stocking or moccasin. I wonder if the chase was a success?"

"What a foot, what a foot!" murmured Netley, unable to detach his mind from the third set of tracks.

They reached the street, and were proceeding toward Harden Kendall's house when Netley slyly nudged his superior.

"Take heed to the lady on the piazza ahead. That's Miss Docia Lettington, and as she seems at home it is probably where she lives. Mighty pretty girl, I admit, and has lots of style. There is as much difference in women as in horses. Some are racers, and built like greyhounds, while other haul carts and look like boxes. Now, if you want a clean-built miss to look at, survey Miss Docia."

Netley was indulging in lightness of speech, but Barford's voice came even but keen in reply.

"Charming as the lady is, I was more interested in the red-haired servant woman who was hanging something on the line in the back yard."

"The deuce! Did you see such a person?"

"I did. Let us hope Thomson will not see her. We are told there are half a dozen red-headed women in the village. We know where one of them lives, but, unfortunately, the law does not give us permission to seize upon a person who may possibly have been a victim of villany and examine her head to see if a lock of hair has been torn away. Netley, it may yet be necessary for you to get acquainted with that servant and act the lover to her."

"Done," said the assistant, grinning, "if you will make love to the other six red heads. Far be it from me to refuse to share pleasure and glory with you. But here we are hard by the Kendall house—great Scott! Do you see?"

"Two women on the piazza, and one has red hair."

"Well, say, this grows interesting. Have we got bugs in our brains, or is this a deluge of ultra auburn ladies?"

"This woman may possibly be a visitor. Harden Kendall's housekeeper is parting with her. Their manner is friendly, but both anxious and grave, or was until they saw us. Now, they look like startled partridges about to take to wing."

"One of them does go. We are to see the housekeeper alone."

The red-haired lady tripped away as if in haste, and presently Barford and Netley turned into the gate of the dead man's house. On the piazza the housekeeper now stood grim, calm, resolute, and full of quiescent force.

"She waits for us," said Barford softly. "We are going to hear something."

CHAPTER V.

A POSSIBLE MOTIVE.

As Barford moved along the walk he improved the chance to look sharply at the housekeeper's feet. She stood at the edge of the piazza, and they were plainly visible beneath her not over-long dress. For one of her size they were rather well-shaped feet, not much above the average size, certainly not square, and fairly well booted.

She had not made the strange tracks in the plowed land, unless when walking with intentionally disguised feet.

Just now there was a slight redness about her eyes, and her face was gloomy until she smiled faintly.

"Gentlemen," she said, coming to business with admirable directness," "I am Miss Belden, caretaker here for the late Mr. Kendall. You have been pointed out to me, and I know you."

"In that case," replied Barford, baring his head, "I trust you will grant an interview with us."

"Certainly, sir. Mr. Thomson, your fellow worker, has already been here. Come in!"

The last words were spoken so brusquely as to be imperative, but she toned down her speech with a smile and a nod that took away the suggestion of an order.

They entered. The house was good without being very expensive, comfortably furnished and well cared for. Mr. Kendall had doubtless been a man who believed in conveniences and a degree of sensible style, but not in furbelows or any sort of ostentation.

And Miss Belden fitted into the plan of the house perfectly.

She seated herself, and then, with the same directness, forestalled Barford's impending question with a statement.

"I don't know a thing that happened last night," she announced. "I had not seen Mr. Kendall since breakfast; I saw no suspicious persons hanging around here, and heard no strange noises. Mr. Kendall had not looked worried or alarmed, so I have no reason to think he was in fear of his life. His letters did not come here, but to the office, yet I think no blackmailer was harassing him. He never went armed, saying that such a thing was rubbish, though he may have made enemies in business. He has said he never inherited a cent and never should, so there was no chance for him to be mixed up in a money difficulty. That's all."

Netley looked at his superior helplessly. In his previous experience he had never met a person who, in a similar case, calmly and systematically offered such a deluge of information unasked. Miss Belden staggered Mr. Netley.

"Do you still think," asked Barford, quietly, "that Mr. Kendall had no enemies?"

"I gave Mr. Kendall's opinion on that point, not my own."

"It is yours that I desire."

"I have known of no trouble between him and anybody else. Let me qualify that statement. He was a man of strong will and blunt words, and rumor has always had it that some of those with whom he had business dealings took offense. I cannot name such a man, however."

The detective remained serene of mind. Strong in the conviction that Miss Belden had something to tell, and that she would tell it in due time, he felt his way easily, a smile on his face.

"Mr. Kendall has been a lumberman?" he asked.

"Yes, with railroad ties as a specialty. He has sent more from this part of the State than any other man. Besides that, he has cut off large tracts of land and shipped the lumber away."

"That means he has employed many timber-cutters?"

"Yes."

"Has anything of the kind been done around here lately?"

"No. All timber near here was cut years ago."

"Where were his latest operations?"

Miss Belden explained, and Barford held to the subject for some time, but when convinced that she could tell nothing about loggers he dropped the point. She had seen no choppers in Grandon for years.

"You have said he was a man of strong will and blunt words. Did you ever know him to strike a man in anger?"

"Never!"

"Yet, when he died, he had in his hand a lock of hair wrenched violently from a woman's head."

The housekeeper was silent. Barford was watching her keenly, trying to read her thoughts, and it certainly seemed to him she was sincerely puzzled. He could detect no guilty knowledge, no desire to work her way out of a difficult situation by cunning evasion of facts.

"I can't understand!" she suddenly exclaimed. "He was no simpering miss to drink milk and water and sniff at roses, but I can't believe he would attack a woman unless he was defending his own life and she was one of those trying to kill him."

"Yet, he had the lock of hair, and there was not a bruise upon him, as there surely would be if he had fought persons hand to hand."

"I can't understand!" declared Miss Belden.

"A strong-willed man like Mr. Kendall might lose his temper in an emergency and act accordingly."

"Maybe so, but——"

"But what?"

"I can't seem to accept what seems sure. He often said he had to fight his way in business like a soldier in war, but I thought that a figure of speech. I never knew him to harm anybody or anything."

"From whose head did the hair come?" Barford demanded swiftly.

"Another mystery. There are various red-haired women in town, my sister Dorcas being one. You saw her on the piazza with me when you came. She has lost no hair. I don't know who has."

"Miss Belden, being a woman you are a better judge of such things than a man, so will you not make it a business to look sharply at every woman you meet and discover who has lost a lock."

For the first time a smile of genuine amusement crossed the housekeeper's face.

"You are not in disguise; you surely are a man!" she commented. "If you were a woman, you would know that another woman could lose a lot more hair than that and then dress her head so no prying eyes could discover any part was gone."

Netley chuckled audibly and looked at his superior as if he felt that that man ought to blush for his ignorance, but Barford remained obdurately composed.

"I yield to your better knowledge on that point, Miss Belden. As I understand it, Mr. Kendall never married?"

"He never did."

"Has he been contemplating marriage?"

The faintest ripple of new light appeared in her eyes.

"I don't know," she replied, quietly.

"But," continued Barford, with a winning smile, "you rather think he has."

"Sir, I am not and never have been a tattler, having been more intent on my business than anybody else's, but this is no time to skulk in ambush. With a dead man in town, justice calls for facts. I think he had been considering that step."

"With whom?"

"Something like a month ago, being out on an errand, I saw Mr. Kendall enter a house where, as I well knew, he—a busy man—had not been in the habit of visiting. Whether he has called there since is, perhaps, for the lady, herself, to say, but I have seen them together a half-dozen times. Always secretly—I really feel I must say it. They met, had low conversations, seemed to have very confidential matters to discuss, sometimes drawing back into dark nooks like doorways. Confidential relations."

The strong light was gone from Miss Belden's eyes now. She was as composed and even-tempered as if discussing trivial things. It was clear that Harden Kendall had not been the only person of powerful will in that house.

"Who," Barford asked, "was the lady?"

The reply came promptly, dispassionately.

"Docia Lettington."

"I have heard the name. I've heard the names of many persons in town since I came here. Miss Lettington! Rich, isn't she?"

"No. Her father, Martin Lettington, was a contractor, in the line of bridge-building until he died a few months back. He was an active man, but Mr. Kendall always said he did not make his business pay well. I am sure that, besides his house, he left only enough for his daughter to live on comfortably."

"Does she live alone?"

"She has a widowed aunt, Mrs. Forrest, with her, and their servant woman, Mary Ray."

"Miss Lettington is much younger than Mr. Kendall."

"Yes. And my mother was twenty years younger than my father."

Netley shut an eye appreciatively as he took in the drift of the interjected remark. Already, he admired Miss Belden.

"Do you mean," Barford asked, "that Docia and Kendall were married?"

"No, oh! no! At least, I've never suspected it."

"Is she grieving now?"

"She must be, after throwing herself at his head so."

"Did she do that?"

"Sir, their interviews were on sidewalks, in doorways, but not in the Lettington house after that one time. Possibly I am too sweeping, for he may have gone there more than once, but certainly not enough to cause comment among the neighbors, and what neighbors don't see and tattle you can pack in a thimble. If he had sought her, it would have been at her house, but when a woman seeks a man, it sometimes is outside. Men never lead well until they are bridled and bitted."

"Then you think Kendall did not care for her?"

"I'm of the belief he did, but that he had not reached the real sentimental stage of affection. Why not? Docia is a fine-looking girl, trim and stylish, and as good-hearted as any person in town. She is worthy of any man."

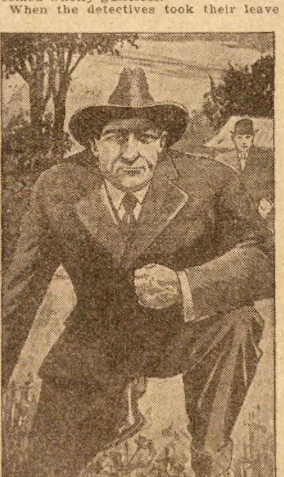
Netley scratched his chin thoughtfully.

"Then," pursued Barford, "she wouldn't be one to do Kendall deadly injury?"

"Why, dear me, no!" said Miss Belden, but she said it without enthusiasm.

During the next few minutes Netley enjoyed himself. Knowing his superior's methods he was aware that Barford, under a mask of suavity, was constantly trying to catch the lady in the web of his crafty questions, but Miss Belden, if possessed of guilty secrets, slipped out of the various traps so skilfully that she seemed wholly guileless.

When the detectives took their leave Netley waited for comments, but as Barford said nothing he was obliged to open conversation himself.



"It was hidden, and he got it."

"Your verdict is—what?" he asked.

"There is not a speck of dust to be seen on furniture, woodwork, or carpets. Miss Belden is a good housekeeper."

"Being a man, you have only masculine eyes. If there is a bit of dust in some corner, Miss Belden is sharp enough to hide the fact."

"Right!" Barford admitted, smiling. "She is a cool, forceful woman, a masterful woman, as I may say. Questioning her was like angling for fish on an iceberg."

"Do you suspect her——"

"I am not a mind-reader in a supernatural degree. I need time to study Miss Belden. If she was concerned in the murder—if, I say—we can see the motive. She was jealous of Docia Lettington. Whether Docia wanted Kendall or not, Martha did. She lost him. She does not love Docia. Her one slip was in saying that Docia flung herself at Mr. Kendall's head, a slip very feminine, but very bungling. She was jealous. Shall we say that here was a motive for something besides words?"

CHAPTER VI.

A WOMAN'S WISH.

A train had just arrived from the city, and Barford turned out of his direct course and mingled with the crowd that had come home from business. Among them was a trim young woman who was a stranger in Grandon. Without seeming to recognize her or to pay any attention to her, Barford went near and spoke.

"Walk half a pace behind me and listen, but don't look at me or appear to heed me. That's right. At number seventy-seven of this street you will see a sign in the window of a room to let. Go there. State that you are about to canvass the town for a book you will name, beginning as soon as your publishers ship your outfit."

"Yes, when they do," commented the young woman dryly.

"Just so! Having secured your room your duty will be to watch the opposite house. A young man, Roland Varrick, has a room there, the front chamber. He claims to be sick abed, but I think the illness bogus. Your business is to find out. Watch! See if he moves about. If he moves, see if he limps. See everything else you can. Having seen, report."

"I shall see."

Barford, still without a look at his companion, quickened his pace and the young woman fell behind. An hour later the "to let" sign disappeared from the window of seventy-seven.

When Barford smoked his final cigar before going to bed he felt that the beginning had barely been made in his work, and he was deeply thoughtful. He was meditating when Netley spoke.

"What feet, what feet!"

"Meaning the tracks of the person who crossed the plowed field——"

"Was it a person?"

"It was neither horse, cow, nor sheep. That about lets the animal world out of it. He surely had odd feet."

"What tracks, what tracks!" murmured Netley, spreading his hands.

"They will simplify themselves later on. Can we say as much for other things? Who owned the red hair? Why did Kendall rob its owner's head? Why did he hurry away with the hair in his hand? Why has Roland Varrick pretended to be sick abed with typhoid when he was able to race through the woods at a run and survive a tumble from a ledge. Why did Docia help him out by going for his lost watch?"

"That imaginary sickness of his—remember that it began days before the murder. Barford, there was premeditation."

"Something was premeditated."

"It was the murder."

"How about the lock of red hair?"

"The outcome of the moment."

"Probably."

There was a long silence, broken only by Netley's adherence to his obsessing idea, which was expressed in a soft whisper—"What feet, what feet!"—while Barford meditated. He felt that he held the strings of the mystery, but he did not know which to pull. Feeling that some dead-wood was possibly mixed up with the important facts, he did not know what to reject nor what to develop. He was still studying when a knock sounded at the door. At his bidding it opened and a boy of twenty was revealed. This comer smiled a gentle smile and nodded amiably.

"Letter for you, sir," he said, his voice soft as a woman's and he held out the object mentioned.

"Thank you," Barford replied, taking it. "Who gave it to you?"

"It was a boy, but I never saw him before."

"Did he say there was to be a reply?"

"He just said take it to you, sir, and gave me half a dollar. See it, sir! Isn't it real pretty? New and bright."

The youth held forth the coin and his expression was that of a child of half his age, or even less. The shine of it gave him singular delight.

"Almost like a looking glass, isn't it?" replied Barford, indulgently. "I like money, myself."

The messenger said something more but Barford had the letter open and was reading. The missive was evidently hastily written.

"Quick returns and large profits! It works that way, this time. My opera glass has already shown Roland Varrick to me. Typhoid? Not on your life! But he is so lame he can hardly cross the room. He sits up, reads, and smokes, but keeps his bed open, ready to get in and bamboozle possible callers. Sly Roland! Why, Mr. Barford, why? He expects company this evening, a caller. I'll tell you how I know. A dull-faced lad has just brought him a letter. After reading it Roland went to the glass, combed his hair, arranged his mustache, readjusted his necktie, and brushed his clothes. The inevitable conclusion is that he is to have a lady caller. Take this from a deep one, Mr. Barford. Now I will don my boy's suit and go to find a messenger."

A queer signature ended this communication, but the detective knew it for that of his female helper. He looked up and saw the messenger still waiting, whereupon he produced a coin and extended it.

"Thank you for your trouble," he said, "and accept this, please."

The boy drew back, shaking his head.

"Thank you, too," he answered, "but I couldn't take it. I have been paid once, and it wouldn't be right to take more. I don't suppose there is anything further, sir? I run errands."

"Nothing more. You may go."

The boy went, and Netley scowled blackly.

"Say," he exclaimed, "that is the same weak-minded lad that Miss Docia used as a messenger to carry Varrick's watch back. If, as I suspect, your note is from Annabel, it's bad that she selected just the same errand-runner that Docia did. One and one sometimes make two, and Docia is sharp."

"So it was Levi, was it? Too late to repent. Well, my note was from Annabel. Listen!" and he read aloud.

"Quick work, sure enough," Netley commented. "Look here, Annabel seems to say that Varrick is fully dressed. If so, his landlord and wife, and, perhaps, his doctor, know his typhoid is a sham."

"Granted! We are finding more fingers in the pie."

"Puzzle, what plums are they after?"

"The point of interest, just now, is that Docia is to call on Varrick."

"Think so?"

"Not a doubt of it. Oh these women, these women! Here is our rest interfered with, and all due to Docia. Get your hat, Netley."

"But suppose Varrick is to do the calling? A man who can gallop through the woods can leave his house, even if he has a sprained leg, and the lure of—but, no the sprain is recent, and he will surely be prudent with detectives in town. Right you are, Barford, it's Docia that will do the calling."

They left the hotel quietly and went toward Peter Caine's house. Nearing that point they saw a light in Varrick's room, but no signs of any movement were to be detected. Barford had his plans dimly outlined, and circumstances aided him. Electric lights dotted the street, but they were far apart, and, after the fashion of country villages, were so small as to be little more than glowworms in the air. Necessarily, dark shadows fell between them, and Caine's house was obscure.

Barford passed by with his face to the front and his eyes twisted hazardously to catch information. Then he suddenly thrust an elbow into Netley's ribs.

"Note that side window to Varrick's room. A vine climbs on a trellis, and it looks like a solid trellis, too. Drop out of sight somewhere, while I stand by the vine. Wait and watch!"

It was half an hour later and various houses near at hand were in darkness, as their occupants retired, when a slight figure became visible at a distance. Barford gazed and then shrank back to the cover of the vines. Netley, better placed for observation, saw the figure and presently recognized Docia.

She came closer, turned to the door, laid her hand on the knob, and entered. As the door softly closed behind her, Barford began climbing the trellis. The season being early the vine was not thick, and he took pains not to plant his feet so as to crush even the slightest of the young shoots. Betraying signs must not be left.

He was still below the window when the size of the treads grew less and he realized that those above were too weak to support his weight. He must forego rising to the desired point, but the open window gave promise.

As he came to a stop he discovered that, expeditious as he had been, Docia was already in the room. Voices floated to his ears, following upon the unheard greeting.

"Is there anything new?" came faintly in a man's voice.

"Anything new!" cried the young woman. "Why, the village seethes with what is new. Those dreadful detectives are everywhere, seeing everything, hearing everything! They are all eyes, all ears. As I said in my note, they have been in the old shack—oh! Roland, Roland!" and her speech ended in a choking sob.

"Who saw them there?"

"It is common talk, though who saw them I don't know. Some of the Grandon people, of course."

"It may not mean anything," said the man soothingly.

"It does mean something, it must! Why else should they be there?"

"They would naturally search all around the village——"

"It was the farther hut they hunted through."

"Tracks, I suppose, left there——"

"That is it, just it! Oh! Roland, Roland!"

Barford sighed because of his inability to see into the room. The girl was half-

(Continued on page fourteen.)

THE SECOND SON'S PLOT;

Or, A Brother's Perfidy

By Annie Brownlee

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CHAPTER XXI.

GRACE remained the night with Hope Fraser, watching the sick child. As day dawned he grew rapidly worse. It was apparent that the little life was ebbing away. He seemed to be in no pain, but his breathing grew gradually fainter. The little hands were damp and chill, the face pinched and blue, the eyes half-closed and glassy.

Grace—or Mrs. Fanshaw as we will now call her—grew alarmed and went herself to summon the doctor. But it was ten o'clock ere he arrived.

"A very urgent case on hand. Could not get here a moment sooner," he explained.

He looked at the baby lying so white and still in its mother's arms. He had been to see the child once before.

"Took a sudden change for the worse, eh? Seems far spent. Sinking rapidly! There is no accounting for the turns children will take. Will last but a few hours now."

The great man soon vanished, leaving behind him a harmless mixture of paregoric and honey.

The young mother sat rigid and voiceless. She had heard all and the anguish in her eyes was terrible.

Grace stooped and kissed her on the brow, saying: "Bear up dear. God knows what is best for little Artie."

"Oh, Grace! I try to be resigned, but my heart and soul cry out against this cruel thing. Just think, soon I will hear my Artie's baby voice no more. His dimpled baby face will look up at me from a coffin, while other children are playing in the sunshine, and chasing the butterflies. Oh, Grace! it is hard! hard! And I love little Artie so!"

Mrs. Fanshaw could not comfort her, for she knew not what to say. A mother's grief cannot be measured by words, even when that motherhood means shame.

Grace remained with the girl mother during all that long September day. As evening approached, the little one sank rapidly. The end was very near now.

At five o'clock the angel of death passed through that troubled house and took its brightest sunbeam, and little Artie lay dead upon his mother's breast.

Hope watched the last struggles of her child without a tear. But her face grew ghastly pale, her lips quivered. She held the little form pressed close to her breast, until the little limbs began to grow rigid. Then she laid the little form upon the bed.

The two lonely women stood looking at the peacefulness of that baby face for several minutes, then the young mother said:

"Grace—I—I would like to have him come and see Artie now. Will you go for him?"

For a moment Grace's calm, enduring spirit shrank from granting the favor asked, shrank from meeting her arch enemy again, from asking even such a slight favor at his hands. But she was too noble a soul to think long of self.

"Yes, dear," she whispered softly. "I will go for him at once."

The next minute she had left the house. The evening was closing in. Now and then the shrill cries of the night birds pealed and echoed on the still evening air. The red streak in the west showed where the sun had gone down.

Grace was walking rapidly toward the mills. She knew that at this hour she would find Arthur Fanshaw there.

A year had gone by since her life had been darkened by a tragedy more terrible than death. No ray of light or joy had penetrated the gloom of her life, since that fateful day when her young husband had been so unjustly sentenced. Sorrow and persecution had been her lot, but her steadfast, trusting soul had remained true to the man she had wedded. Never so much as in thought had she wronged him.

Not seeing Arthur Fanshaw about the yards, Grace knocked on the door of his private office—a little frame structure standing apart.

The door was opened, and the two stood face to face for the first time in months.

"Your child is dead, and Hope has sent me for you," Grace said, in reproachful, measured tones.

He did not reply at once, but drew his hand across his eyes, as though to wipe away the mist.

Then in a strained, hollow voice, he said: "I will go at once."

Grace turned away. He took one step toward her.

"Have you no word to say, Grace?" he asked.

"What do you expect me to say?"

He did not reply; his eyes sought the floor. She raised her head with a haughty, imperious gesture, and continued:

"Between you and me there can be no friendship. Did I consult my own inclinations, I should not be here now."

"I merit your scorn and indignation," he said, strangely humble.

"You do, indeed!" was the curt reply. "But you also merit much worse than that."

He winced.

"True! But I may yet be of service to you."

"You can't undo the past," she cried, sharply.

"No, but I could atone for it."

Grace gazed at him wonderingly. What could he mean?

Just then there was the sound of coarse laughter, and two men came around the corner of the office. The first stopped suddenly, and, with a sinister grin, tilted his hat rakishly to one side.

"Holy Patrick! So this is the way the wind blows, eh? I am none too soon at taking the helm," and he leered suggestively. He had been drinking more than usual of late, and his face was swollen and purple.

Arthur Fanshaw came out of the office and silently locked the door. The stern rage in his face was terrible to behold.

Grace turned away without so much as glancing at the man. Arthur Fanshaw had turned to follow her.

"Don't be so flip, old man, I want to speak to you a minute."

"You will have to wait, I am engaged just now."

Arthur had gained Grace's side, and they had both turned toward the path that led across the field to the Fraser cottage. In a stride the drunken man was by her side. He clutched Grace's arm roughly and wheeled her round.

"I have a word for you, my fine lady. I called at your mother's today, but you were out."

Grace jerked her arm free, but stood staring at him blankly.

"I tell you what it is, as my wife you have got to come and live with me. I won't be the laughing stock of the whole country any longer. As my wife you will obey me. Do you hear me, madam? You will come and live at the Beeches."

His voice had risen shrilly, and several laborers had paused to listen.

"I refuse utterly to live at the Beeches. I shall remain at my mother's home. You have no claim on me whatever, and you know it. You are Mark Heriot, an impostor."

Grace had Viking blood in her veins, and it was beginning to tell.

"I will have the law on you if you refuse," he roared. "The law will compel a wife to live with her husband. I will have the law on you, I say," ignoring her thrust.

"Well spoken, bonny boy!" cried Tom, the fiddler, who had accompanied him thither.

"Right ye are, my lucky! A wife must live with her own husband." And he patted his companion on the shoulder and roared with drunken laughter.

"No law would compel me to live with Mark Heriot, the highwayman."

The man's drunken face grew ashy. With a leap like a tiger he had her by the arm, and shook her till she grew faint and dizzy.

"Don't you dare say that again," he hissed.

Arthur Fanshaw had grown deathly pale, and the muscles of his face worked strangely. He grasped the other by the shoulder and hurled him back.

"You coward! You scheming scoundrel! You dare to utter such words! You——"

He never finished the sentence. The other struck him with the force of a sledge hammer and felled him to the ground. For a moment he lay stunned and bleeding, the other towering above him.

"Guess you'll keep your finger out of my pie now. If you don't——" He clenched his fist suggestively.

Grace shrank back, and covered her face.

"I will follow soon," Arthur Fanshaw said in a humiliated tone to Grace.

The drunken rowdy laughed.

"He'll have to tidy up a bit before he'll be presentable before ladies."

Arthur Fanshaw's face was terrible to behold. Beneath the blood and grime a look of terrible resolve and determination had settled.

"You will pay dearly for this," he said, with a calmness that was more awe-inspiring than any wrath could be. "You imagine you are secure, but your fool's paradise will tumble about your ears and that speedily. I have borne with you long and patiently, but this is the last strain. I will bear with you no more."

"Fire ahead, old man! You can't hit me, without first hitting yourself."

He drew a bottle of liquor from his pocket, knocked the neck of it against the corner of the office, and extended it toward the other.

"Let's wet it, old man? No! Oh, all-right, then! Here, Tom, drink to my success and prosperity."

Tom, the fiddler, obeyed with alacrity, and the two staggered away together. As they gained the public road, a horse and buggy came rapidly toward them. It stopped as it came opposite, and with a glad cry an old woman got out.

"Oh, Markie, my boy! You surely haven't forgot me?" And she tried to grasp his hand.

With a look of annoyed recognition he stepped back.

"Don't know as I do 'member you, old girl," he cried, mockingly.

"Mark! Mark! You surely remember your old mammy? You can't have forgotten so soon."

"Old mammy! Ha! ha! Fine joke that is!" and he roughly jostled the old woman aside and passed on.

Dazed and seemingly bewildered the old creature gazed after him. Then her eyes began to glitter, her form straightened, her fist was raised and clenched and she shook it after the retreating form.

"Was it for this I fed and tended ye all the years that are gone. If you think you can treat me—as is almost your mother, you might say—like that, you have made a mistake. I'll make you wish you hadn't forgotten the old woman, that I will, or my name is not Martha Heriot."

CHAPTER XXII.

When Grace reached the cottage Hope had washed and prepared the little body for its last resting-place. She had a mother's jealousy to the last. No hand but her own should touch the little form.

"Artie would be sure to know if mamma did not dress him," she said, in her simple, childish way.

An hour later Arthur Fanshaw opened the door of the cottage and walked in. Old Josiah Fraser sat by the door whittling a hickory stick. As Arthur passed, the old man lifted to his a countenance on which grief and reproach were stamped. Arthur Fanshaw's proud spirit was rebuked by the voiceless pain and anguish of that look. It was just such a look as a wounded cur lifts to the eyes of a brutal master.

In the little bedroom a fire burned, for the air was chill. By it sat Hope Fraser. An old woman sat by the girl trying to comfort her. The woman rose as Arthur Fanshaw entered, and bowing coldly, left the room.

Grace had already withdrawn, and the neighbor joined her, and together the two walked as far as the little lattice gate. The woman wended her way in the direction of her home, but Grace remained leaning over the gate; her mind in a turmoil of uneasy thought.

The meeting with the man who had usurped her husband's name and position had stirred her deeply. Could he carry out his threat? Would the law compel her to live with him? It had taken her husband from her, and sent him to prison for another's crime. Would it compel her to live with that other? Her head fell upon the gate, and she forgot the place and time.

Hope lifted her head and looked steadily at Arthur Fanshaw as he entered the room. There were no tears in her eyes, and no sigh escaped her. She rose quietly and pointed to where the little form lay.

"God has taken Artie from us," she said, in a voice of solemn earnestness, as she removed the white cloth from the little waxen face. Arthur Fanshaw shuddered. A cold chill crept up his spine. He saw his own infant features.

"My little Artie," the girl murmured tenderly. "How quiet the restless little body is now."

Arthur Fanshaw stood looking down at the cold, marble-like face of his little dead child, and spoke no word.

"God has taken little Arthur to be an angel," the girl continued. "It is better so. He will meet us just inside the pearly gates; and perhaps in Heaven we will be happy. Something seemed to go wrong with us here on earth, but in Heaven, there will be no marriage, or giving in marriage."

Arthur Fanshaw moved uneasily and passed his hand over his brow. He was thinking terrible, bitter thoughts, but he would not give them utterance.

"Night and day, since little Artie came, I have prayed God to bless him, to make up to him for the loss of parents, like other children had. You see God has answered my prayer. He has taken my little darling to be with Him in Heaven," and her voice quivered.

A Bible lay turned face downward on a stand by her side. Old Josiah Fraser had been reading it, and had left it thus. Hope picked it up mechanically,

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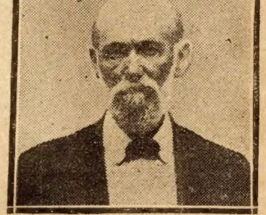

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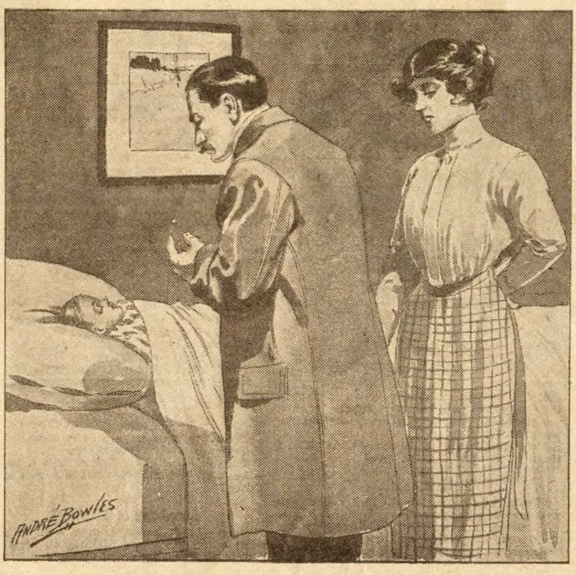


"God has taken Artie from us."

and her eyes fell upon the verse: "The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, to the third and fourth generation." With a cry of suppressed fear and anguish she said: "It isn't true! It can't be true? Oh, Artie, my darling!"

Arthur Fanshaw went to her side, and read the verse she pointed out with trembling finger.

A sudden fury seized him. He took the book from her hand and in his blind rage ground its sacred pages into the floor.

"It's a lie!" he cried, in the white heat of passion. "They tell us that God is merciful, and then they tell us that He punishes little innocent children. Don't believe it, Hope. The child is happy. It has never committed a wrong act. It must be in Heaven." His anger was cooling. He went near to her and laid his hand gently upon her arm.

"Arthur, you should not have destroyed that Holy Book!" she said, reproachfully.

"Forgive me, Hope, but the words maddened me. The child must be safe!"

"Yes, I will trust God to care for my little boy," Hope said. "But our punishment has come quickly."

She walked to the other side of the bed, and stooping down kissed the little face and hands fervently. The tears came at last, and rained down upon the silent face of her dead babe. Arthur Fanshaw could endure the strain no longer.

"Hope," he said, in a deep, husky voice. "Hope, if there is any sin, it is mine, and the punishment will be mine, also. Do not worry about the child. Be sure he is in Heaven. My life has been all wrong from the very beginning. I have brought nothing but sorrow and misfortune to all who have been unfortunate enough to care for me. I have sown the wind, and I am now reaping the whirlwind. It am anxious to atone for the past; but I must do it speedily. If it will be any consolation to you, Hope, we will be married at once, this very hour if you choose. I can at least give you the protection of my name."

Hope did not reply for a few seconds. Then she sadly shook her head.

"No, Arthur, I don't wish it now. If Artie had lived, for his sake I would have rejoiced at your words. But marriage cannot blot out the past and Artie does not need your name now." She spoke kindly, but with decision.

Arthur Fanshaw's face was like the shadow of death. The one whose love he had thought would endure forever, had now refused his name. Was he such a villain? Had he murdered the love of every human creature? It must be so, since Hope had ceased to care for him.

"I deserve it all," he replied. "But I would have liked to have left you my name. Good-by," and he grasped her hand across the bed.

Between them, and beneath their clasped hands, lay their little child, cold in death. "Good-by," she said. "I pray God that when we meet again, it will be in Heaven."

"If there is a God and a judgment, we will have to meet again," he said, and his voice broke.

CHAPTER XXIII.

As Arthur Fanshaw left Hope's presence, he went stumbling down the path to the wicket gate, for he was blind with misery and remorse, and a fierce anger burned in his heart, that things should have turned out so. He felt then that every man's hand was against him, and his hand against every man's.

Arthur Fanshaw did not notice Grace leaning over the little wicket gate until he put out his hand to open it. She gave a startled exclamation. The sound of her voice roused him.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I did not know you were here."

"I—I was leaning over the gate thinking. You asked me this afternoon if I had nothing to say to you. I ask you now, can you, or will you allow this man to force me to live with him?"

"You need have no fear of him. It was only an idle threat."

"It is no idle threat!" she aswered quickly, and handed him a crumpled paper.

He looked at the paper for several seconds. "It is not worth the paper it is written on," he said. "Do you know who this man is?" he asked, with visible agitation.

"Mark Heriot, the highway robber," she answered, calmly and without hesitation.

He did not reply, but his brows knit, his fingers interlaced. His bosom heaved, his breath came in quick, short gasps.

"Grace, I will not seek to deceive you longer. I stand before you tonight the most miserable man on earth. I did what I did, knowing well that I should repent it. But I was driven to it. My desire for wealth and power dulled every other sense. I was only a second son and the thought was torture. My desire for power and wealth mastered me then, it would master me again. I had not the power to resist it. And then, there was revenge."

Grace waved her hand impatiently

"Why do you tell me all this? You have ruined his life and mine," she replied bitterly.

"Yes, and my revenge has turned to dead sea fruit," he said, and his voice fell to a broken whisper. "There are some men to whom love is a passing breath, just an event in their lives, and then it is gone. To me it is a wound that gathers and breaks, but never heals."

Grace shivered; the words fell like fire upon her soul and withered all sympathetic thought.

"In this the death hour of your child, you speak to me of love. To me—your brother's wife. Do you ever think of what he must be enduring?" she asked, lifting her voice almost to a wail. "When you see that man, that instrument of your revenge, who is now your master, when you see him wasting his substance, and dishonoring his fair name; have you no regret for the work you have done, the misery you have forced upon him? Do you think of him sometimes?"

"Yes, I think of him," he said humbly. "At night, when the wind sighs through the trees, and the long, silent, sleepless hours drag slowly away, I think of him then; and I think of him as a happy man. There have been times when I have envied him. What if he wears a convict's garb? His soul is free—he is yoked to no burden of remorse, no blighting influence overshadows his life."

"You are simply reaping what you have sown," Grace replied.

A harsh, mirthless laugh broke from him. It came from the bitterness that lay deep in his heart.

(Continued on page thirteen.)

WRINKLES GO QUICK

Beauty Doctors and the Medical Profession Stand Aghast in Amazement, Marveling at this Wondrous New Method of Removing Wrinkles, Which Has for Ages Baffled the Leading Experts of The Earth.

WRINKLE BOOK FREE

This book is only for persons who wish to remove their wrinkles. Not sent to children or curiosity seekers.

REMOVE WRINKLES NEW WAY
PRINCESS TOKIO WRINKLE BOOK
WRINKLES GO QUICK - NEW WAY

No Worthless Creams
No Plasters
No Massage
No Masks
No Rollers
Absolutely New Treatment Never Before Offered by Others in America

THE PRINCESS TOKIO

New Method of Removing Wrinkles.

Send Quickly for This Great Wrinkle Book and Start at Once to Remove Your Wrinkles.

Did you ever see a Japanese woman with a clouded complexion? Did you ever see one with wrinkles, irrespective of age? Then learn how they achieve and maintain these lines of splendid feminine beauty. For the first time in America, the Princess Tokio methods are being made known, and they are a revelation. Never before have Christian women been able to solve the secrets of these oriental beauties, whose faces and forms have been the marvel through the ages. But at last the treasure-trove has been unlocked, and there is set before every American lady who writes immediately, the full knowledge of these methods.

The Princess Tokio Wrinkle Book is a message full of sisterly feeling and sympathy for the American ladies. It tells, without hesitation, all about the Princess Tokio new method of removing wrinkles without harmful creams, pastes, lotions, or plasters, or mechanical appliances.

Reports from all over America prove conclusively the wondrous excellence of this remarkable new treatment and it is simply astonishing the thousands of letters being received from grateful women. A letter today from Mrs. H. E. Campbell states she used this treatment for two weeks and her wrinkles are all gone, and she further states that her face is as smooth as it was when she was a girl and that she is so happy that she cannot say too much in praise of this remarkable new treatment.

Ada Colville of Texas states that she used the treatment eight days and her face is entirely free of wrinkles and she is so delighted that she has found something that will keep her young longer.

A letter just received at this office from Mrs. A. L. Morran, away off in Canada, states that she was delighted with this new combination wrinkle treatment. That it removed all her wrinkles and leaves the face smooth as an infant's and makes the skin fresh and young looking.

Mrs. E. W. Jones in her letter states: "The Princess Tokio Wrinkle Treatment is excellent." She further states that it not only removed her wrinkles, but made her face as soft and smooth as velvet, and that she never before found a remedy which would make her young-looking, and that she tried Chicago and New York treatments without success.

From the glowing letters of praise pouring in, it is evident that this remarkable remedy has created a veritable sensation and furore in the fashionable homes, and prominent society women and actresses adopt this method of remaining young-looking, banishing all signs of age.

Not Sent to Ladies Over 70.

The Princess Tokio book is free to every lady who writes, except those over seventy years of age. To these the Princess Tokio methods extend no hope—for they have neglected themselves for such a long period, it is impossible to benefit through this knowledge after 70 years of age.

If you are a matron, would you like to look like a girl again? If you are fifty years of age, would you wish to look like a splendid young woman of twenty-five? If you are forty would you like to look like a girl just out of her teens? Then to you this book will be of inestimable value. Keep that in mind. There is no charge for the Princess Tokio Wrinkle Book. It is a rare message for ladies wishing to learn of the new way to remove wrinkles and regain a youthful face.

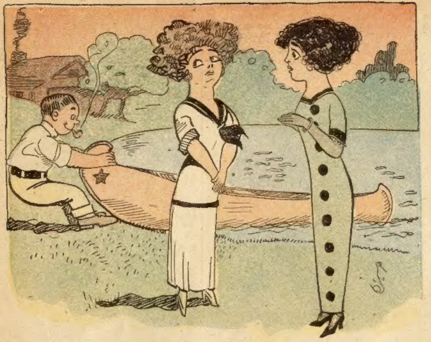
SEND NO MONEY.

Under no circumstances will money be accepted for the Princess Tokio Book about wrinkles. It is yours absolutely free. It will be given to you with a willing hand, by one who believes that there has dawned the most splendid day for American women of all ages up to seventy. It is a message of the most hearty good cheer, and so unlike anything American, it is a treat in its direct instructions. All you need to do is to send and ask for a FREE copy, addressing the Princess Tokio, B. C., Suite 2289 Central Bank Building, Denver, Colo.

You may rest assured that this book will be sent in a plain wrapper.

It tells how to remove every wrinkle by entirely new treatment in only eight days.

N. B. Arrangements have been made whereby all our readers may receive all that is offered free, and you must enclose a stamp to prove you are really in need of a quick wrinkle remover.



Winsome Miss—I'll not go out in a canoe with him again.
Dainty Maiden—Why not?
Winsome Miss—Nine times boating and never saved me from drowning once.

It Often Happens.

"I guess I got a little too gay," admitted the landlord. "I wouldn't paint a doorstep for the old tenant."

"And he moved?"

"He moved; and now I've got to paint the entire house before I can get a new tenant."

A Cold Collection.

Deacon (to vicar in vestry)—Are you suffering from a cold, sir?

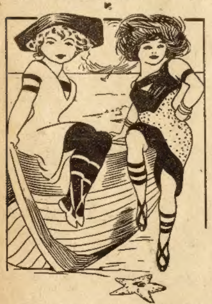
Vicar—No. Why do you ask?

Deacon—Well, there's about a dozen cough lozenges in the collection plate!

Getting Posted.

"Father, Alfred has something to say to you tonight."

"Well, what have you and your mother decided I must tell him?"



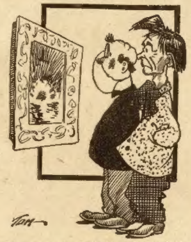
"Why is Claude getting round shouldered?"

"I thing he is bent on marriage."

Some Hope.

She—Your uncle is still in the prime of life. You may have to wait a long time for your inheritance!

He—Oh, no! he just bought an airship yesterday!



Friend—How realistic your painting is! It fairly makes my mouth water.

Artist—A sunset makes your mouth water?

Friend—Oh, it is a sunset, is it? I thought it was a fried egg!

Estimates.

"To what profession do you think you will educate your son?"

"I think he has the instincts of an architect," replied the prudent parent. "Whenever he adds a column of figures his result is usually two or three times what any one else thought is could possibly be."

Stung!

"How fat and well your little boy looks."

"Ah, you should never judge from appearances. He's got a gumboil on one side of his face and he has been stung by a wasp on the other."

Called.

"I thought Brown expected to be elected for a second term?"

"He did."

"What happened?"

"He made an announcement that he would not be a candidate unless the people made it clear to him that they wanted him to run."

"Well?"

"The people called his bluff."

From Week to Week.

"How many magazines do you take?"

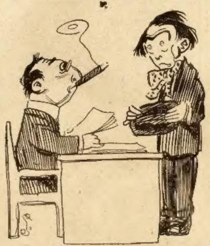
"Six."

"That beats my capacity. I can't carry over four sets of serial stories in my head."

A Full Size Job.

Gibbs—No automobile for me. One is always buying a tire for the wheels.

Dibbs—Not for me. It's all I can do to buy attire for my wife.



The Author—Have you examined my story, sir? Did you find it strong?

The Editor—I have examined your story, sir. It is so strong I left it out on the fire escape.

Diplomatic.

First Legislator—You don't do anything for the suffragists, yet they seem to like you. How do you manage it?

Second Legislator—Easy enough. When they come to me I tell them I'll be perfectly willing to talk about their voting when they look old enough to vote, and that sends them away smiling.

Thirteen His Nemesis.

The Visitor—Why are you here, my misguided friend?

The Prisoner—I'm the victim of the unlucky number thirteen.

The Visitor—Indeed! How's that?

The Prisoner—Twelve jurors and one judge.

On Dear Old Broadway.

"Polonius was a very wise man. Just consider his advice to his son."

"Reads all right. But would a really wise man attempt to tell his son anything?"

Sleighing or Slaying?

Bess—That young doctor seemed peevish when May was talking to him.

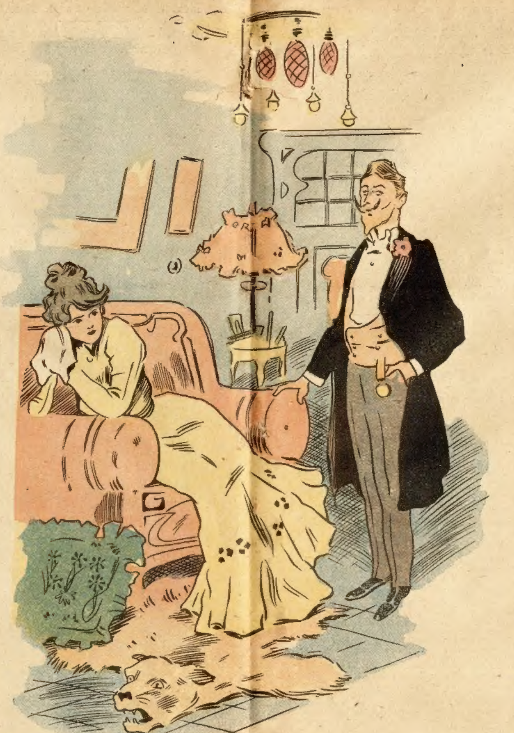
Jess—I don't wonder; she asked him if he was fond of sleighing.

Misunderstood.

Patience—Don't you think Bob is a pretty smooth proposition?

Patrice—Yes; when he takes the trouble to shave.

THE UNKINDEST CUT.



The Newly-Married Wife (to her husband)—Oh, John, it's too dreadful that the very first pie I make for you should be eaten by the cat.

The Husband (sympathetically)—Never mind, dear, don't cry. I'll get you another cat!

Hard To Decide.

"Edward," said the teacher, "you have spelled the word rabbit with two t's. You must leave one of them out."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Edward; "which one?"

Hard.

"Oh, nonsense; what is there hard about roller skating?"

"The floor."

Reason to Be Thankful.

"John is making quite a lot of money nowadays, I guess."

"Has he paid you what he owed you?"

"No, but he hasn't tried to borrow any more."

A Precaution.

Rosa, the colored cook in a well-known Trenton family, is very much in love with her young husband, whom she calls "Mistah Watts" in the soft North Carolina accent. Recently the Watts family have taken a boarder, a stylish young mulatto schoolteacher named Emily. Upon Emily becoming a member of the family, Rosa thus addressed her:

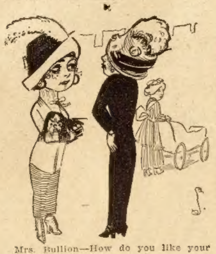
"Miss Em'ly, you come heah a strangah. Yo' stay heah a strangah. Yo' come down in the mownin', yo' say, 'Good mawnin', Mistah Watts.' He say, 'Good mawnin', Miss Em'ly.' Dat's all theah is to it. Yo' undehstan'?"

And Miss Emily and Mr. Watts both evidently understood, for peace reigns in the home.

Something Worse.

A friend once wrote Mark Twain a letter saying that he was in very bad health, and concluding: "Is there anything worse than having toothache and earache at the same time?"

Twain wrote back: "Yes, rheumatism and Saint Vitus' dance."



Mrs. Bullion—How do you like your new nurse girl?

Mrs. Uppers—Well, she's all right with the baby, but she's dreadfully careless with Fido.

Progress.

"I suppose your domestic life is entirely peaceful?"

"Well," replied Mr. Meekton, "I would not boast that Henrietta and I dwell in positive peace. But, with the assistance of her relations, we do arrange to arbitrate."

Cigarette Barred.

"Did you insist on having 'love, honor and obey' included in the marriage service?"

"No," replied Mr. Flimgilt; "the only thing I made my wife promise was that she wouldn't smoke in the house."

Not Really Playing.

"I am afraid that Bliggons plays golf on Sunday."

"Maybe," said the contemptuous rival. "But, if so, it's the only day in the seven on which he does play it."

Rather Difficult.

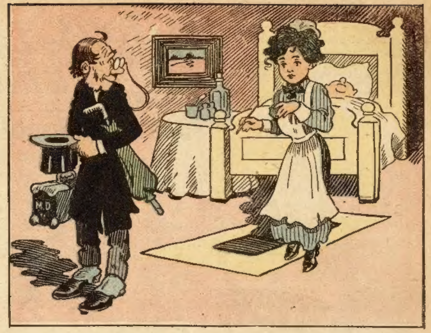
Judge—What is the charge against this prisoner?

Policeman—Holding a man up and knocking him down, your honor.

A Gift of Nature.

Heck—Has your wife made her will?

Peck—No, she's merely developed it.



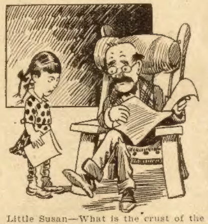
New Nurse—Oh, doctor, you forgot to tell me how often to give him the sleeping powder.

Dr. Fathed—Er—ah! You ought to know that yourself. Give it to him only when he is awake.

He Had Them.

"I want damages!" shouted the bruised and battered citizen who had just been beaten up by his athletic rival.

"I think," replied his friend and adviser, after a critical inspection, "that if you look in the glass you'll find you've got 'em."



Little Susan—What is the crust of the earth like, pa?

Papa—Just like the crust mamma puts on her pies, pet.

Well Trained.

Hub (angrily)—What! More money? When I'm dead you'll probably have to beg for all the money you get.

Wife (calmly)—Well, I'll be better off than some poor woman who never had any practice.

Why He Lost It.

She—Why did you lose your temper at that game of cards?

He—It was the only thing I had to lose.

A Physician's Confession.

First Doctor—I hear your practice is becoming very small.

Second Doctor—Yes, I am getting out of patients.

Two Causes, One Effect.

One morning at breakfast Joey announced that he had the misfortune to fall out of bed the night before.

"That was because you slept too near where you got in," said Ethel, who likes to reason about things that happen to Joey.

"Pooh, that wasn't it!" he retorted, with scorn. "It was because I slept too near where I fell out."

Quite Satisfactory.

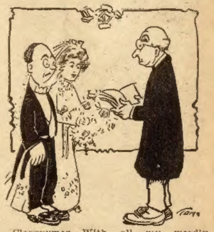
An old colored barber is responsible for this gem: When asked if he favored the abolishment of capital punishment, he replied: "No sah, I don't. Capital punishment was good enough fo' my fo'fathers, an' it's good enough fo' me."

Just Went Home.

It was Sambo that was bemoaning the fact that he had forgotten to fasten the door of his chicken house the night before.

"Were they stolen?" he was asked.

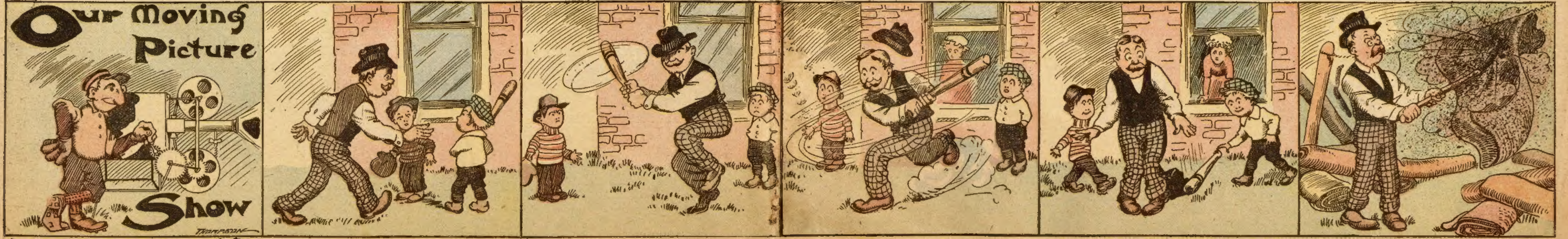
"No; they went home."



Clergyymen—With all my wordly goods I thee endow.

Prospective Bridegroom—Say, parson, isn't this rather early to award alimony?

PUT TO PRACTICAL USE.



Mr. B. B. Fann—Here boys, let me show you how I used to line 'em out!

"Yes, siree, right back in my old form! Low ball!"

"This shoulder exercise is just what I need! Watch that one go!"

Mrs. Fann (in window)—If its shoulder exercise you need I've a nice large pile of rugs that I want you to beat. Come along now!

Mr. Fann—Confound it! I might have known she'd be on the job when I started to have a little fun! (Bing! whack!) Blast the luck!

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Betzville
Funny-Haps

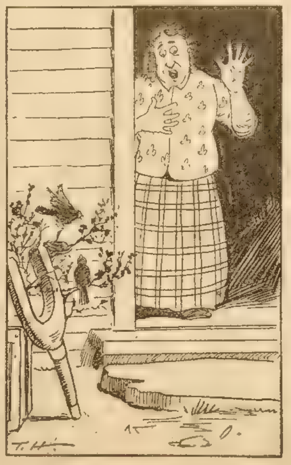
Aunt Rhinocolura and the Leg

By Ellis Parker Butler

LAST August Aunt Rhinocolura Betz met with a serious mishap. She was going along Main street, which is one of Betzville's leading thoroughfares when Sim Dwiggs' yellow hound dog went insane with the heat and dashed into Aunt Rhinocolura and bit her on the leg. By the greatest good luck the dog bit her on the wooden leg instead of the other, or Betzville might soon have had one of the swellest funerals in its history. As it was, Aunt Rhinocolura hurried home and cauterized the wooden leg, and hoped for the best, but the dog died and its head was sent to the city, and the report came back that the dog had had the rabies, and that the only way to save Aunt Rhinocolura's life was for her to come to the city and take the Pasteur treatment. Unfortunately this would have interrupted the garden social that was to be given at Aunt Rhinocolura's house, but it came out right enough, for Uncle Ashdod Clute when consulted, said that as the wooden leg was not integrally a part of Aunt Rhinocolura it would not be necessary for all of Aunt Rhinocolura to go to the city to take treatment. He said it would only be necessary to send the wooden leg. So Aunt Rhinocolura did that.

As soon as the leg was on its way Aunt Rhinocolura called in Bildad Gubb, who is our leading carpenter and cabinet maker and gave him an order for another leg. She explained that she wanted one about size eight, and then she said she would like it ever so much if he could make her a summer-weight leg this time. She said the hickory one she had had was a good strong limb, but almost too heavy for summer use, and asked him if he could not make a lighter one—not too light, just about medium weight, something she could wear comfortably until time to put on winter legs.

Bildad thought it over and then said he thought he had a piece of wood in his shop that would be the very thing, and that it would make a neat and serviceable leg—something stylish and light, but still guaranteed to wear well. He said that it was a piece of willow that he was saving to turn potato mashers out of on his lathe, but that he was willing to sacrifice that aspiration and make a leg of it. So he did.


It had burst into bloom.

When he delivered the leg, Aunt Rhinocolura retired into her own room and tried it on, and she was very much delighted with it. There were a few alterations necessary, but not many. It was a little too long in the waist, if we may use the term, and made her poke up into the air on the left side, but Bildad easily remedied that, and then Aunt Rhinocolura said it was the most comfortable leg she had ever worn.

That was a very damp summer, and a very busy one for Aunt Rhinocolura. She was on her feet in the yard or the street nearly every minute of the day, and she never thought of wearing a rubber shoe on her willow leg. In fact, she hardly gave her willow leg a thought until one night when she was retiring and happened to look at the leg, and then she saw it was breaking out in buds. By morning it had sprouted so much that she had to trim it off with her nail scissors. Every morning after that she had to manicure her wooden leg before she could put it on, and one week when she stayed in bed for three days with neuralgia, the leg got such a start on her that she had to have Sally, her maid, take it down cellar and trim it up with the hatchet.

After that the willow leg seemed to have really started to grow, and often when Aunt Rhinocolura went out for the day she would have to be hauled home, for her real foot would get all tangled up in the sprouts of the wooden leg, and she couldn't walk six feet without tripping, and the left side of her skirt would bell out as if blown by a breeze, when it was only crowded out by the sprouts of the wooden leg.

Aunt Rhinocolura said she wouldn't have minded if the leg had not been so much work. She said it was pleasant to waken in the morning and see the fresh green leaves at her bedside, but that when a leg got so that it had to be pruned every half-hour, it had certain inconveniences. It worried her so much that it brought on another attack of neuralgia that kept her in bed a week, and the sight of the fresh green leg annoyed her so much that she had Sally set it out on the second-floor porch. When Aunt Rhinocolura recovered and went hopping out onto the porch to get her leg she hardly recognized it, it had flourished so. It had burst into bloom, as we might say, and in the tender twigs a pair of wrens had built a nest and had set up housekeeping.

Aunt Rhinocolura is one of the kindest-hearted ladies in Betzville, and she would never in the world have thought of tearing down that nest and destroying the little eggs, but she couldn't think of any good way in which she could wear the leg without disturbing the wrens. It would sound all right in a work of fiction to say she put the leg on and that the wren continued to hatch her eggs while Aunt Rhinocolura went to the sewing society or trod the light fantastic toe at Philemon Jones' barn dance, but the fact is that even a summer-weight wooden leg goes thumpty-thump, and that is no good for eggs that are hatching. A wren may love its little home in a willow tree, but it cannot be happy if the tree goes bumping about the country.

So Aunt Rhinocolura hopped back into the house and sent for Bildad Gubb, and ordered a new, light-weight, non-sproutable leg. Then she had the willow leg carefully removed to the back yard and planted there, and it is growing finely, and is one of the most interesting sights in Betzville.

The next week's "funny-hap" will be "Colonel Phipps and the Ostrich." It is a strangling wheeze.

* * *

Both Were "Scared."

"Usually when you are 'scared,' you can get over it most easily by going straight to the thing that 'scared' you," observed the village philosopher. "The worst 'scare' I ever had was on a lonely stretch of the Clover Leaf Railroad shortly after midnight, one night, when I was walking home, about four miles from the station.

"On the way I had to pass through a wood with the trees on either side, making the light on the track most uncertain. I had gone but a few steps into the uncertain light when I looked around and saw a man following. I was 'scared,' because the spot was ideal for a robbery, and I had considerable money in my pockets. I hurried forward, looked back, and saw the follower had come nearer. I hastened my steps for the second time, but on looking back again I saw the fellow had come still nearer. I walked a little faster, and drew out and opened a large pocket knife I always carried. For the fourth time I looked back and saw the fellow had come what I thought perilously near.

"Then I stopped, thinking there would be as good a place as any to have the matter out. As he came forward I recognized him as one of my neighbors. Explanations followed:

"'See what you were about to get,' said I, as I displayed my open knife.

"'And see what you were about to get,' he said, as he showed me two rough stones he was carrying.

"All the time I thought he was hurrying forward to catch me, he was holding back to let me pass the wood first, and he thought I was checking my steps in order for him to catch up with me."

* * *

A man stores up a lot of trouble for himself by failing to forgive his enemies.

Vividly Hit Off.

"The late Gen. James B. Weaver," said a Des Moines Populist, "had a just faith in the American farmer. He believed that from the farmer the Republic's regeneration would come.

"He once condemned, in a lecture, the caricaturist's farmer, a type purely imaginary, that he hit off vividly with an anecdote.

"A farmer of this type," he said, "was seated on a barrel whittling a stick when a traveler stopped and said:

"'Well, sir, what do you think of Christian Science?'

"'Hain't heard nothin' on it,' the farmer answered.

"'Never heard of Christian Science? Well, well!' said the traveler; and he resumed:

"'With which side do your sympathies lie in the Turco-Italian war?'

"'Didn't know thar wuz no war,' muttered the farmer, and he bit off a chew from a big black plug.

"The traveler then tried him on another tack.

"'Do you consider the Wright biplane inferior to the foreign monoplane for swift, safe flying?'

"''S fur's I know,' said the farmer, 'the world hain't seen no flyin' yit.'

"'Why, man,' exclaimed the traveler, quite staggered, 'don't you ever read the newspapers?'

"'I useter,' said the farmer, without lifting his eyes from his whittling. 'I useter, but ten or 'leven years ago I stopped it. They got too frivolous fur me. Since then I bin readin' a book.'"

* * *

New Financiering.

George M. Bailey, whose editorial paragraphs in the Houston Post are known all over the country, believes that the Southern negro has a good head for business and finance.

"Rastus," said Bailey, in upholding his claim, "was an old darky who worked two acres of land on a big plantation, and got his foodstuffs from the big commissary which supplied everything to the tenants. Rastus, having poor land as his share, was continually in debt, because he could never raise enough cotton to pay off his bill at the store. There came a season, however, when cotton grew and flourished on Rastus' acres and when the storekeeper measured up the cotton he told Rastus

"'You've got nine dollars coming to you.'

"'Look hyuh, white man!' exclaimed Rastus. 'Go back dar an' look at dem books ag'in. You don't owe me no nine dollars.'

"The clerk complied, and returned with the statement that he had been mistaken, and that Rastus still owed the store nine dollars

"'Now you talkin' sense,' said Rastus, contentedly. 'Come on back hyuh an' give me a strip ob bacon.'

"You see," explained Bailey, "that old fellow knew that as long as he kept in debt to the store they would give him credit, and he was afraid that if he ever got out of debt the store might refuse him credit the next time he asked for it. Hence his pleasure because of his financial difficulty."

* * *

The "Feh-st" Floor.

The New England accent sometimes sounds strangely in the national capital, says the Boston Transcript.

The other day, according to Arthur B. Krock, the Washington correspondent of Colonel Watterson's Louisville Courier-Journal, embarked upon an elevator in the Capitol building. Into the same car there came a man Krock at once took—and his guess proved to be correct—to be a New Englander.

"Gallery floor, please," said Krock to the elevator man as the car began to rise

"Feh-st floor, please," said the New Englander.

The car rose, and as it passed the first floor a puzzled look spread over the New Englander's face. As the car stopped at the gallery the New Englander almost broke through the reserve enough to ask Krock's assistance.

"I wanted the feh-st floor," he explained.

The elevator man looked dazed.

"You mean," said Krock, "the f-i-r-s-t floor."

"Yes," said the young man, "I want the feh-st floor."

"You take him to the f-i-r-s-t floor, George," said Krock to the elevator man.

The New Englander finally got to his destination and according to the last reports he is trying to cultivate a modified Western "r."

* * *

A Life Sentence.

The Marquis of Queensberry, apropos of the long sentence of Foulke E. Brandt, said at a dinner in New York:

"It reminds me of an incident in London. A certain peer drove in a taxicab to Westminster, and when he got out, gave the driver a very small tip.

"The driver mistook him for a member of the House of Commons and snarled:

"'I hope you get turned out next election and don't never get in again!'

"'Don't worry, my friend,' said the peer, as he set off for the House of Lords. 'Don't worry—I'm in for life.'"

The Second Son's Plot.

(Continued from page nine.)

"Grace, I am not all bad. My nature is a peculiar mixture of good and evil. The time is not far distant when I shall be forgotten. Do you think you could forgive me, Grace?"

"My forgiveness can make little difference to you, now. There is one, however, whom you might make happy, even yet," and she glanced toward the cottage.

"I have offered her the protection of my name, to atone as far as lay in my power, but she has refused. As in the case of all others who have cared for me, I have murdered her love."

Grace did not reply. She felt at that moment that she could not sympathize, and dared not reproach. His remorse and self-condemnation were too poignant for mortals to cast reproach in his face.

"I have sinned, but I have also suffered," he went on. "The time is drawing near when I shall trouble the world no more. In the few days that are left to me, I shall try to atone for the past. This is the ninth of September, on the fifteenth I shall pass out of this life forever."

Grace's face whitened, and a look of fear crossed it. "You—you would not—?"

"I will outrage God's laws as little as possible. I have a presentiment that I will die on the fifteenth of September, and I am convinced it will come true."

Grace smiled, a faint relieved smile. It was only a morbid fancy then.

For several seconds there was absolute silence. Each was busy with his own thoughts. Then Grace spoke:

"I must ask you again not to allow that monster who calls himself my husband to drag me before the courts and compel me to live with him?"

"It shall not be," he answered, without hesitation. "He may bring you before a court, I am powerless to prevent that, but I can thwart him in claiming you as his wife. Do not fear that you will ever be compelled to live with the fellow. I will see to that."

A moment later and Arthur Fanshaw was going slowly down the road toward his office. The last few days he had spent almost entirely at his office. His companion in crime, had turned the Beeches into a most undesirable place of abode. By crime and deception he had become master of his father's estates, but he was compelled to leave his own home for—the other. Truly things had come to a pretty pass. His sin had found him out!

A boy was dispatched from the office to bring the foreman, who was given his orders for the next few days.

"I shall be gone several days, perhaps. You must do the best you can during my absence," he said dismissing the man.

For a long time he sat in silence. His face was stern and deeply shadowed. Deep resolve was written there, also deep humiliation. He rose and paced the floor for several minutes. Then his face grew soft and tender. His mood had changed again. He was thinking of the delirious happiness of the first few weeks of his acquaintance with Hope Fraser. For a brief period he had believed she held his world in her little white hands. Then came the awakening.

When his iron will had swept away all obstacles, when the girl had surrendered her very soul into his keeping, given her young life unrestrainedly into his hands, then man-like, having gained his desires, he grew weary of his toy. She was a flower whose bloom had withered, and whose rare perfume, through constant association had become monotonous. But had he really forgotten her?

While he was thinking, the soft glow left his cheek, the tender light his eyes. The hard, stern look that had grown habitual had settled over his face again.

He ceased his restless pacing the floor, and dropped wearily into a chair by the table; his head sank upon the polished oak, and his arms encircled it. Lying thus he reviewed the past, and his face grew more set and hard.

CHAPTER XXIV.

With torturing persistence his mind recalled, one by one, the events of the day, and one by one, the events of the last eighteen months came crowding upon him. A convulsion of nature was upheaving every memory of the past. Every memory had its own particular sting, and fell like a blight upon his soul. He did not intend to bring such ruin to the lives of human beings. But it was the burning of a hopeless and scorned love that led him on.

But above the squirmings of remorse, above the smothering of regret, above the plea of a maddening and hopeless love, was the voice of revenge, shrieking loudly in his soul. That man whom he had bought as a slave, and who had now become his master, must be brought to the dust at his feet, even if in the doing he must fall himself. Yes; that was the only thing left for him to do. He must go to Ottawa and seek out the minister of justice and say: "I have sworn falsely. The man who was condemned as Mark Heriot, is Mark Fanshaw, and my own brother."

That would bring the scheming villain to the end of his rope, but at what a cost. Yet what did it matter? He was in the twilight, and the day of his life was done.

Perhaps it would be better if he allowed things to take their course. In the natural course of events things would surely right themselves, and the guilty be punished in God's own time. No, he was a disgraced and ruined man, turned from his father's house, and compelled to see a stranger living there. The gall and wormwood were there, sure enough, and it was he himself who had prepared the bitter potion.

No, no, Mark Heriot must be brought down, and with him the ruins of what might have been a good man.

It was better now that the light of his life should go out. He had no duties to tie him to earth. The woman whose life he had filled with suffering, and whose heart he had broken, would not accept reparation at his hands. The others he could return to their own. But the blighted life of the girl who had suffered for him, and the ruined home of old Josiah Fraser, he could not return to them.

Never for an instant, never in his bitterest agony, did Arthur Fanshaw lie to his own soul, and believe it. In his heart he knew that the resolution he had formed was prompted more by revenge than remorse. His was not the nature to be a saint when sick, to cry out to God when overwhelmed with his own sin—that was for the weaklings of the world. The iron had entered his soul, but his own acts had been the cause of it. He would not cry out like a schoolboy, and ask for mercy for a punishment which he had willingly brought upon himself.

For hours he sat there, full of self-reproach, and eager for revenge on the man who was once his slave, but was now his master. Bitter, accusing, cynical thoughts, rushed through his brain. The hands of his watch pointed to three o'clock before he sought the couch to rest.

It was not sleep that he wanted. Sleep of late had become too full of terrors. Fearful as were his waking hours, the hours of sleep were more so.

Tired nature was about to assert itself, however, when the furious clanging of a bell and the shrill whistles from the mills roused him. He sprang to his feet.

"Was I dreaming?" he cried to the chairs and tables. "No, it is real." and he snatched his hat and dashed out.

As he opened the door the glare almost blinded him. One of the mills was on fire. It was the woolen mill, and it seemed to be one sheet of flame. For a moment he stood and looked at it, and a grim smile played over his set features.

"Fate is playing me another card," he thought, then he started suddenly.

At an upper window a white, terrified face appeared, and above the roar and crackling of the fire a shrill scream rang out.

People were running in every direction. Women screamed and hid their faces as that white, terrified face appeared through the sheet of fire. Men cursed and ran madly about, vainly trying to do something.

An old woman ran screaming toward the burning building, her white hair flying loosely in the breeze, giving her a weird, ghostly appearance. She ran straight to Arthur Fanshaw, and clasping her hands, fell at his feet crying piteously:

"Save her, save my Nellie! She is all I have!"

"Poor soul!" a woman standing by said. "Her daughter is in the mill. She went early to fill some bobbins, I hear."

Arthur Fanshaw lifted the old woman gently, and gave her into the care of the other women, then darted away. Straight into the burning building he went. Men shouted at him, and women screamed for him to come back, but he heeded them not at all.

The building was dense with smoke and flame. The lower part of the stairway had been eaten away, but a ladder stood near by. In an instant he had bridged the gulf and reached the second floor.

To the right, and between him and the door that led into the room where the terrified girl was pounding frantically upon the window frame, was a blinding sheet of flame. It would be sheer madness to try to pass it, yet there was no other door leading into that room. He set his teeth hard. The smoke was suffocating, and the flames had scorched his face and hair. He drew back; there was a crash, part of the heavy staircase had fallen, cutting off his way of es-

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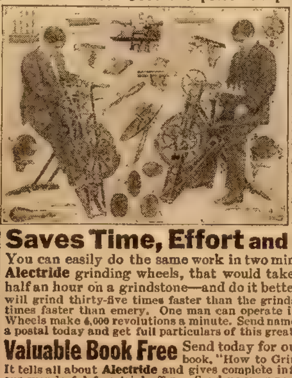

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GENTLE JABS.

The road is easy if love is the vehicle.

It's a poor stationary engine that won't run.

Dead men tell no tales and offer no excuses

He who does no wrong has no fear of the law.

Even the weather prophet is entitled to his opinion.

A woman may prefer a man's presents to his company.

The wise youth enters upon a career by hustling for a job.

The poorer the band the harder the drummer has to work.

If you are satisfied to remain poor the world will see that you do.

If a man is too slow to catch cold it can at least overtake him.

Life has many shadows—but most shadows are due to sunshine.

The more questions a woman asks the fewer answers she remembers.

Don't sneer at the man in a hole. He may climb out and kick you in.

One thing rarer than a day in June is a woman who has nothing to say.

But the beauty that is only skin deep is better than the kind that rubs off.

Some people fail to practice what they preach because they need the money.

And the man who fails in a good cause is better than two men who didn't try.

A wise man forgives his enemies to prevent them from getting back at him.

Money makes the mare go, and a sheriff's attachment makes the automobile go.

Too many children hate to see their parents spend their hard earned coin on [illegible]

Our idea of a true friend is one who will listen to your talk when you don't say anything.

The love of money is said to be the root of all evil—and the poorer the soil the better it seems to thrive.

And it sometimes happens that a married man is so well trained that he never discovers that he is henpecked.

Be a philosopher, but don't be one of the mooney kind who ponder over life's [illegible] instead of trying to earn a living.

The [illegible] makes at the marriage [illegible] if as [illegible] the woman [illegible] the face before [illegible] table

cape. A window was before him. It faced the same way as that at which his young employe stood, with his foot he shattered the glass. A delicious breeze came in. It swept the heavy cloud of smoke away for an instant, but it also fanned the flames to greater fury.

For a moment he stood poised on the window sill, the crowds below watching him in silence and awe. He was only about ten feet from the window where Nellie Orton stood. She saw him, and for a moment ceased her wild screaming.

It was a fearful moment. Hundreds had gathered to watch the fire, but no one could render any assistance. The Fanshaw mills and factories had been criminally neglected in regard to fire protection or escapes.

Arthur Fanshaw could feel the walls tremble; they would soon give away. If he would save his own life and the life of the girl he must hasten.

Face to face with death, and the terrible scene before him, Arthur Fanshaw was as calm and unmoved as though sitting alone in his den.

The crowd looked on in a sort of dull stupor, yet full of admiration for the calmness and self-possession of the man. They did not know the secret of his unruffled spirit. How could they know how little he valued his life

Casting his eyes about, they fell upon a pile of cloth, lying ready for shipment. In a moment he had selected a web of stout goods and had several yards unrolled. Leaning as far out as he could with safety, he threw the girl the end. She caught it, and obeying his command, fastened the end securely. He fastened his end also, and with the remainder of the web thrown across his neck, he crept along the stout cloth to the window. A mighty cheer went up as he reached the sill in safety.

This extremely interesting story will be concluded in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once.

* * *

The Detective Barrier.

(Continued from page seven.)

hysterical, frightened, perhaps shaken by other emotions. Baffled in his desire to see her, he fell back on further listening.

"Those detectives!" she went on feverishly. "Oh! how I shudder at thought of them. They will learn the truth, and then what, oh! what will happen to me? I wish I had never seen that man!"

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

* * *

THAT SPRING DELUSION.

Bring out the lid of yesteryear,
  The skypiece of a bygone spring—
The summer time will soon be here;
  And also don't forget to bring
A toothbrush and a cake of soap,
  Some pumice, sulphur, lemon juice;
With these and other kinds of dope
  We'll make that straw hat still of use.

Now wet the lid. Yes, that's the way.
  Now soap and brush and hold it—so,
The while I scrub and scrub it. Say,
  I think this thing will be a go!
It's almost white where I have rubbed—
  Now, look at it! Why, that's immense!
See how it shines where it's been scrubbed!
  This job will save me 50 cents.

Hold on! Don't squeeze it that way! Gee!
  Don't you know how straw hats are built?
Look out! Aw, don't tell that to me—.
  You've squeezed it till you've made it wilt!
It's just a pulpy mass of straw—
  I'll hit you if you dare to smile—
A soapy, sticky wreck—oh, pshaw!
  I'll wear my derby yet a while.

* * *

The Way of Man.

The Gerrymanders were going out to the theater and Gerrymander sat by the fire reading his paper, heedless of his wife's admonitions that it was time to get ready. At seven o'clock he went into his bedroom and said to his wife:

"Where's my studs for my evening shirt? I can't find but two of them, although I could swear that I left all of them in this little china box, on my dresser the last time I used them. Look around and see if you can't find them. And put my cuff-links in the cuffs of this shirt, won't you? Wish you'd find me a clean collar to wear with an evening shirt. I don't see anything here but wing collars, and no one with any pretense to style ever wears one of them in the evening. I wish you would look at the lint and dust on my evening coat. Get a brush-broom, won't you, and brush it off for me? If the housekeeping here was all it ought to be, there wouldn't be lint and dust on a fellow's clothes when he takes them out of his closet.

"Where's my evening shoes? What? They are just where I left them last? No, they are not, for I feel dead sure that I left them in my closet and they are not there now. Look around and find them for me, can't you? We have to catch the 7:30 train or we'll not get there before the curtain rises. Wish you would look around and find my shirtfront protector. It ought to be in this box, but it isn't. Where's my white tie? Look it up for me and then come and tie it. You know I never could tie a tie without making a perfect mess of it. Who knows where my evening gloves are? Strange how things do disappear in this house! Somebody get my evening shoes. Find me a clean handkerchief, won't you? Good heavens! Here is a button off this waistcoat! See if you can't button this collar for me. Got my shoes yet? You found them in my den? I guess I am about ready, and it's time we were. For Heaven's sake! Aren't you dressed yet? What time do you s'pose we'll get there? By George! If it took a man as long to dress as it does a woman I don't know what—Beats creation how much sooner a man can get dressed than a woman can'—Puck.

WANT ADS

Want and Classified Advertising not less than 14 words accepted for insertion in the Ledger and Blade at 25 cents per word.

AGENTS WANTED

$25 Weekly taking orders for cutrate groceries. Outfit free. Progressive Table Supply Co., Toledo, Ohio.

TURN Your Spare Time Into Money.—You can easily make $10 a week by acting as our representative. Write today. R. M. Place, Dept. 13, 239 N. Cap. St., Washington, D C.

REMNANT Store Cincinnati. Greatest dry goods bargains on earth. Proposition to agents and storekeepers.

AGENTS make $30.00 weekly selling our 500 Handy Household Articles; catalogue free. Scheff Co., 1136 Wells St., Chicago

$2.50 per day paid man or woman. In each town to distribute free circulars and take orders for concentrated flavoring in tubes. J. S. Ziegler Co., 443 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago.

AGENTS on salary or commission. The greatest agent's seller ever produced; every user of pen and ink buys it on sight; 200 to 500 per cent profit; one agent's sales amounted to $620 in six days; another $32 in two hours. Monroe Mfg. Co., X., La Crosse, Wis.

$7 00 per hundred collecting your neighbors' names; city or country; 35,000 wanted by July 20, reply quick. United Advertising [illegible] Desk 4, La Grange, Texas.

AGENTS—Don't hesitate. We show you how to make $5 to $25 daily. Particulars free. Bolster Mfg. Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

FIVE dollars per hundred for collecting names and addresses. All or spare time. Stamp for particulars. Pen Sales Co., Darby, Pa.

WANTED Agents to sell rich looking imported 36x68 rugs. $1 each. R. H. Carter, Milan, Tenn., sold 115 in four days. His profit, $51. You can do as well. Write for sample offer and unique selling plan. Exclusive territory. Condon, Importer, Stonington, Maine.

STARK BRO'S, Louisiana, Mo., Big Idea in tree selling Best terms known to nursery world [illegible]

HELP WANTED

GOVERNMENT Post Office Examinations everywhere soon. Get prepared by former U S. Civil Service Examiner. Write for Booklet B. Patterson Civil Service School, Rochester, N. Y.

WANTED—Agents to sell Printers, Engineers, Motormen—anybody who wants clean hands—Vanco, the perfect hand soap and household cleanser. Let anybody try a sample and you make a quick sale. Add twelve dollars per week easily to your income. We want hustling representatives in every shop. Enclose ten cents for full-size can and particulars. Address Box 112, The J. T. Robertson Company, Manchester, Conn

WANTED. Post Office Clerks. City and Rural Carriers. Thousands needed. Examinations soon. Trial Examination Free. Write Today. Ozment, K, St. Louis

WANTED—Active man in each locality. To join this Society. And introduce our Memberships. Sick, accident, death benefits. All or spare time. Make $50 to $500 a month. Write. Box LH-293, Covington, Ky.

WANTED—Mail Clerks, Carriers, Clerks in Treasury, Agriculture, Patent Office and other departments in Washington. Excellent salaries. Examinations everywhere. Write for list of positions open. Franklin Institute, Dep't B 31, Rochester, N. Y.

WANTED: Young man between 18 and 35 for position as salesman. Must be neat, energetic; not afraid of work; with confidence in himself; nerve and an ambition to make himself successful. Experience not needed because each new man is immediately taught the science of selling and our sytsem. This work is interesting, instructive, and very profitable. Position permanent; income what you make it. References required. Address Wm E. Duff & Company, Suite 323, 803 W. Madison St., Chicago.

WANTED—500 men. Secret Service. Best money on earth 10c brings proposition. Address: Secret Service, Martinsville, Virginia

SOUND men, 20 to 40 years old, wanted at once in every State for Electric Railway Motormen and Conductors; $60 to $100 month; no experience necessary; fine opportunity; no strike; write immediately for application blank Address Mgr. Z, 552 Dwight Building, Kansas City, Missouri

FEMALE HELP WANTED

LADIES can make shields at home; $10 per 100; work sent prepaid to reliable women. Particulars for stamped addressed envelope. Eureka Co., Dept. 17, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

MUSICAL.

WELL-KNOWN Composer Wants Song-Poems, at once. Chance for successful writers to make a fortune! All poems not available will be returned promptly. The Len Fleming Co., Suite 504 Gaiety Theater Bldg., New York City.

VIOLINS

VIOLINS, bought, sold, repaired and exchanged. New and old, used instruments, $6 to $1,000.00. Shipped on approval. Tell us what you need—we have it. Violin Exchange, Rosedale Station, Kansas City, Kansas.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

START Auto Tire Repair Business, big money. We furnish complete Vulcum Outfit, supplies, directions and instruct you how to start your business, enough for fifty vulcanized, guaranteed repairs, $2. With this you can earn $25, as regular business or in spare time Richardson Tire Company, 20 Ford St., Hartford, Conn.

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PATENTS bring riches when of value. [illegible] cover the subject. We give [illegible] Wide experience. Trade Marks Registered. Write today. Beeler & Robb, 243 McGill Bldg., Washington, D. C.

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FRUIT LANDS—Beautiful Kootenay Valley, B. C., 88 acres, subdivided into 2 4-acre tracts, 11 of 5-acres and one of 25 acres. The 25-acre tract is improved, has dwelling, stable, ice-house, etc. All for a limited time at the low price of $6,000. Adjoining land held at $200 per acre. Will cost you nothing to write and investigate. Owner forced to realize thereon. ¼ cash, balance easy terms. Only six hours from Spokane, Wash. Pure water, ideal climate and very low taxes. Address D. B. Dulmage, Morgan Park, Illinois.

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1000 acres choice Michigan land for sale Partly improved. Will sell all or part. Railroad, telephone, rural delivery, artesian wells on property. For particulars write Warren Britt, Tonawanda, N Y.

DELAWARE Farms. Money making farms throughout the entire State, $15 an acre up; live stock, implements and crops often included. We offer best bargains, and pay buyer's railroad fare. Catalog free. Ford & Reis, Inc., Dept. 96, Wilmington, Del.

MISCELLANEOUS

BARGAIN—Three fine neckties $1. Gold-plated Pin free. Ties and pin retail at $2.50. This offer is for short time only. Send $1 at once. Money refunded by return mail if not satisfied. Name colors desired. W. C. Watkins, Parnassus, Pa.

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ADVANCE Socially—Our Mail Way tells us how to exchange good motto and message cards (that really say something "worth while") among either ladies or gentlemen everywhere. It's big, world-wide, strong and reliable. Registers new members now for a year for 25c. We start you right. Fascinating, absorbing, profitable, results assured. All fun lovers and optimists send to Advanced Correspondence Exchange, B 714 Pitcairn, Pa.

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MARRIAGE paper free; best published for sure results; reliable. Eastern Agency 55, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

MARRY—Hundreds of ladies and gentlemen will marry, many rich, highest characters, selected descriptions, names and addresses. Send 10c. Dr. Hutchison, Dept. 24, Sedalia, Mo.

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MARRY, thousands wealthy, anxious for early marriage, descriptions free. Confidential, 268 Market, San Francisco, Calif.

ANECDOTES OF PEOPLE

No Laughing Matter.

The irrepressible "Tody" Hamilton, who is held to know as much about circuses as any human being could, tells of the misfortune of an Ohio man who was attempting to pilot a [illegible]-tent show through the [illegible] West.

This owner lost a number of valuable animals, by accident and otherwise, so that it was with considerable sympathy that one of his keepers undertook the task of "breaking gently to the old man" the news of further disaster. The keeper accomplished this with much tact, as follows

"Mr. Morgan, you remember that laffin' hyena in cage No. 8?"

"Remember the laughing hyena?" repeated the owner. "What the deuce are you driving at?"

"Simply this, Mr. Morgan; he ain't got nothin' to laugh at this mornin'."

Cause for Gladness.

'Twas eventide. The boy stood on the bridge, clapping his hands vigorously. Beyond the brow of the hill a dull red glow suffused the sky.

"Ah, little boy," remarked the stranger, who was rather near-sighted, "it does my heart good to see you appreciate yon beautiful cloud effect!"

"Yes, sir," replied the lad; "I've been watching it for ten minutes."

Upon the boy's face there appeared a smile of radiant bliss.

"A real poet, without a doubt. And do you watch sunsets often, little boy?"

"Sunsets? Why, that ain't a sunset, guv'nor! That's the village school burning down!"

How Naughty!

An artist was describing a revue that he had seen in Paris

"It was a very decollete revue," said he. "In certain parts of it I was forcibly reminded of the story of the Parisian chorus girl. This girl had been put through her paces and finally engaged. 'And now,' she said, 'about my costume. What costume shall I wear?'

"'Let me see your tongue,' said the manager. 'Ah, it's coated. That will do.'"

The Gallant Laborer.

"Oh, thank you," exclaimed an elderly lady to a laborer, who surrendered his seat in a crowded street car, "thank you very much!"

"That's orl right, mum," was the rejoinder. As the lady sat down the chivalrous laborer added:

"Wot I say is a man never ort to let a woman stand. Some men never gets up unless she's pretty, but you see, mum, it don't make no difference to me!"

NO MORE DRUNKENNESS?

Simple Home Remedy Said to Quench All Desire for Liquor.

NEW YORK, Special.—In view of the success of a very remarkable treatment for the drink habit, an association of New York business men is co-operating to help victims of this degrading and ruinous habit to overcome it in the privacy of their own homes.

To carry out this purpose, the Renova Co., No. 200 Broadway, Branch 70, New York, has volunteered to distribute freely a trial supply of the remedy, which, it is asserted, can be used with equal success without the knowledge of the victim. The claims made for the treatment having been fully substantiated, press and public should unite in giving this offer wide publicity.

Beware of a boss girl, young man—unless you are looking for a boss wife.

No Need.

Prof. [illegible] de Provost of the Sorbonne, in a discussion of seasickness in the lounge of the George Washington, ended with the sad words

"Seasickness is incurable. The sole consolation I can extend to the seasick is that afforded by the story of the captain and the lady

"'Captain,' said a lady passenger, 'my husband is suffering dreadfully from seasickness. Could you tell him what is the best thing to do?'

"The captain with a loud and hearty laugh replied

"'There's no need to tell him, ma'am—he'll do it!'"

Not Ready Yet.

Senator La Follette, discussing the career of a rather notorious "captain of industry," said:

"There's a story about him. He once built a castle on a mountain peak. As he showed the gray, medieval-looking pile to a friend, he said:

"'I don't know what to call it. What name do you advise?'

"'If I had it [illegible] those Scotch [illegible] in the Highlands,' said the friend. 'Why not call it Dunrobin?'

"'Dunrobin? Dunrobin? Yes, that would be a good name,' said the millionaire; 'only, you see, I have no intention of retiring yet'"

Deaf Man's Break.

If any man ever admired his wife, that man was Howler. And when Fitzboodle asked Mrs. Howler to get up and sing "There Is a Garden in my Face," the husband glowed with pride

No matter that she had a face like a hippopotamus and a voice like an elephant, he sat beaming as she sang, and could not refrain from bending over to his neighbor and whispering:

"Don't you think my wife's got a fine voice?"

"What?" said his neighbor, who was a little deaf

"Don't you think my wife has got a fine voice?" repeated Howler.

"What?"

"Don't you think my wife's got a fine voice?" roared Howler.

"Sorry!" returned the neighbor, shaking his head "Can't hear a word you say. That awful woman over there is making such a frightful row singing."

Really Forgetful.

A minister's wife, a doctor's wife and a traveler's wife met one day recently, and were talking about the forgetfulness of their husbands. The minister's wife thought her husband was the most forgetful man living, because he would go to church and forget his notes, and no one could make out what he was trying to preach about.

The doctor's wife thought her husband the most forgetful, for he would often start out to see a patient and forget his medicine case, and therefore travel miles for nothing.

"Well," said the traveler's wife, "my husband beats that. He came home the other day and patted me on the cheek, and said, 'I believe I have seen you before, little girl. What is your name?'"

No Need of a Mask.

"Miss Johnsing, why did yo' refuse toh take yoh mask off las' night when de call come foh unmaskin'?"

"What's de mattah wid youse, nigger?" I didn't hab no mask on!"

"Dat's what I tol' all dem niggers, but dey wouldn't believe muh."

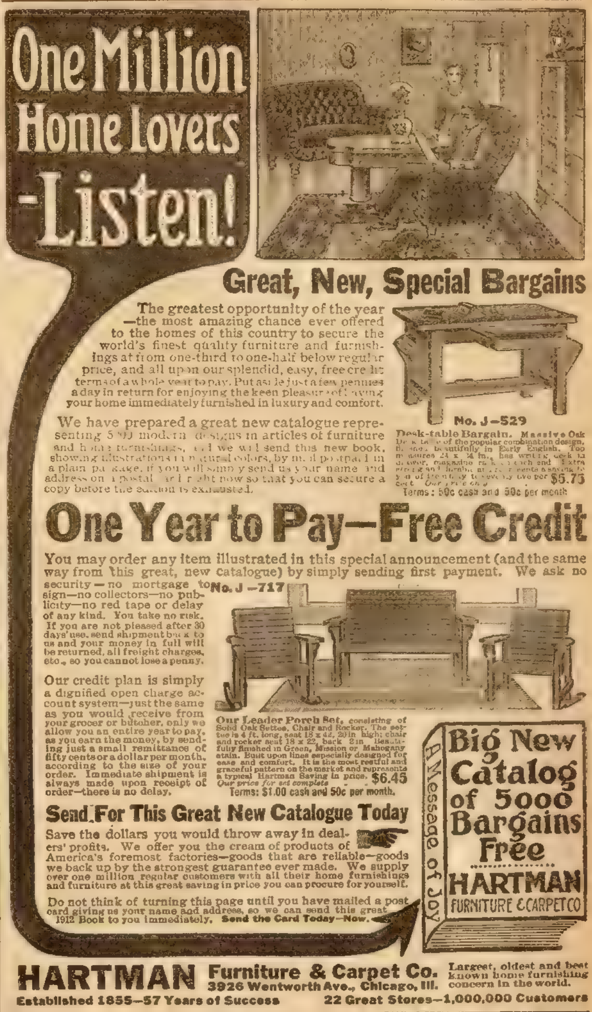
Proof Enough.

Outer—Your boat is a fast sailer.

Skipper (hired catboat)—You bet she's fast. That's because her bottom is smooth. She's smooth as a bottle. Jus' chock up another sandbag er two, please; th' wind is freshenin' and I can't leave th' tiller. Goin' ter be a gale I guess.

Outer—Have you examined the bottom lately?

Skipper—Only las' week. I was out with a party an' we upsot, an' I jus' tell you that there bottom was so smooth not one of us could hold onto it.



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Desk-table Bargain. Massive Oak Desk table of the popular combination design, finished beautifully in Early English. Top measures 24 x 34 in., has writing desk in drawer, magazine rack at each end. Extra strong and durable at [illegible] a saving to you of from fifty to seventy-five per cent. Our price only $5.75

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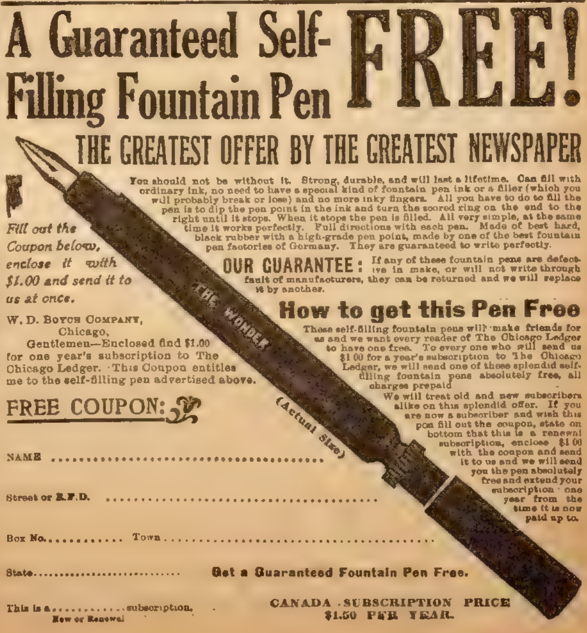

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Hunting case beautifully engraved, gold finished throughout, stem wind and stem set, fitted with 7 jeweled American lever movement, guaranteed 20 years, with long gold finished chain for Ladies vest chain or fob for Gents.

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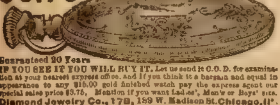

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Montezuma's Treasure;

Or, Two Boys in Mexico

By Captain Jack Judson

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Begun in No. 19, May 11. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER X.

THE BRIDE OF THE SUN.

IT IS the voice of Tecuza!"

This exclamation falling from the lips of Bernard Blair in the underground corridor to which he and Dick had penetrated was echoed back with many strange sounds. They had been confronted by the puma and now to hear the voice of the guardian hag of Cholula was distracting enough.

The Mexican cat turned her head and listened. The same voice was again heard in tones of command. The tawny beast slunk back and vanished.

The ladder which had led down into the wider tunnel which was almost a chamber had fallen to the ground at Dick's touch, and there was no way of restoring it. In the silence that surrounded them the boys looked at each other, but seemed to be rendered speechless by the situation.

"The only way out of the hole seems to lie forward," whispered Bernard, at last.

"It looks that way."

The light ahead had vanished, and a weird stillness pervaded the scene.

"This must be Tecuza's abode," Dick resumed. "If she were alone and had not the puma for an ally, we might overcome her. It is the beast that is most to be feared."

"You are right Dick. The puma of Mexico is a ferocious enemy to fight, and this one, under the command of the old witch, is no common foe."

Secure for the time being in the darkness, the boys remained silent. They could hear nothing ahead and the gloom seemed to hedge them in with a network of horrors.

"Something must be done," Dick suddenly exclaimed. "We cannot remain here and perish, like rats in a trap."

At length they moved on with their hands on their weapons, ready at any time to fight man or animal. The corridor stretched on and on, and at last they reached a wider space which they could not measure by putting out their arms.

By feeling around the wall to the right, they came abruptly upon an opening which they resolved to investigate. They halted when a sound reached them, and, drawing together, stood side by side, ready to repel any foe that offered to attack them. A light flashed up ahead. It increased in brightness, and Dick suddenly let out a cry. Straight ahead stood the ogress of their dreams.

It was not the Tecuza they had seen in the depths of the Cholulan pyramid, but quite a different creature. She was no longer arrayed in rags, but her raiment was of the most gorgeous description. On her head was set a crown of ancient workmanship, and from every point it seemed to blaze with jewels. The boys gazed and wondered.

She stood in the garish light which fell from a number of candles set in sconces of strange art, and at her feet crouched the puma, now and then raising her head and looking up into her face.

The walls of the chamber were carved with outlandish figures, like ancient idols, and the youths saw there the old Mexican gods just as they had appeared in picture books of the days of the Montezumas. No wonder they stared and held their breath.

As yet the light had not reached them, though they could take in this strange scene in all its weirdness, and whilst they gazed a musical sound reached them.

Back of Tecuza, who looked like an Aztec priestess, rose a throne and upon it sat a skeleton which wore a crown that shone like gold. In one bony hand was grasped a scepter, and one of the skeleton feet was placed upon a little heap of bones, as if the monster had crushed some rebellious subject under his foot.

Suddenly Tecuza raised her hand and waved the scepter above her head. Strange words pealed from her throat, the puma rose and uttered a wild cry. The old hag spurned her with a harsh command, and the beast crouched again.

"Let us end all and rush forward!" cried Dick. "You take the puma, Bernard, and I will attend to the ogress of the chamber."

"Not yet," answered Bernard. "Let us see what all this trumpery means."

Dick lowered his pistol and leaned forward. At that moment a concealed door behind the hag opened and a tall Indian-like man entered. He bowed to the high priestess of the underground domain, and she touched him with the jeweled tip of the scepter.

"Welcome, Gautomozin," cried Tecuza. "I am ready to see the new bride of the sun."

"How like Aztec days," whispered Bernard, who had caught every word which had been uttered in the loftiest manner. "The bride of the sun, is it? We shall now see some more foolery."

The man turned toward the spot from which he had come, and was followed by Tecuza and the puma.

"Come!. We will see this wild adventure through," ejaculated Dick. "If it ends in doom, doom it must be."

They sprang nimbly across the floor and tramped noiselessly behind the singular trio.

"Heavens!" cried Bernard, as another chamber opened suddenly before them. "It is Judith!"

The boys fell back among the shadows of the wall. Their eyes seemed about to leave their heads, for before them stood their beautiful preserver, who had been carried from her home by Colonel Machete of the merciless lancers.

She was still a prisoner in the room where we last saw her. The lights revealed every nook and cranny of the strange place, and the boys saw that Judith's face was divested of every semblance of color. She fell back a foot when her gaze singled out Tecuza, who advanced with a hideous grin.

"Ho, you have come!" cried the hag with a laugh. "I have you still, my bird."

To these words Judith vouchsafed no answer, but looked at the old woman with fearless mien.

"You fled from me at Cholula," continued Tecuza. "You went over to the foes of the republic and you even sent a message to them that they might know how to capture the city of the Montezumas."

"I deny nothing," was the reply, as Judith threw a quick look toward the puma which had crawled to her feet and crouched there. "I am half American."

"I know, I know," was the response. "You have come from your home to be the bride of the sun."

"And not the wife of Colonel Machete?"

"He fetched you hither that you might some day brighten his estate with your smiles, but he did not know the vengeance of Tecuza. Ha, ha! I shall steal a march on the lancer colonel. I will make you the bride of the sun after the rites of Montezuma."

Judith was seen to recoil a step.

"Gautomozin?"

The Indian came forward and bowed

"Bring the lord of the sun," commanded Tecuza, and the Indian disappeared.

Three minutes later he came back, pushing before him on a throne-like chair a mumified figure clad in the richest robes. Judith uttered a cry of terror at sight of the hideous object.

"The lord of the sun!" the hag exclaimed, whirling upon the girl. "This is the brother of Montezuma. This is the keeper of the treasures for which thousands have offered up their lives. You shall become his bride. You——"

"No, no!" cried Judith, as she fell back, shutting out the scene by holding her hands over her eyes. "Have you no mercy, Tecuza?"

"The last priestess of the Aztecs knows not what mercy it," was the sonorous answer. "You, girl, have betrayed your country. You have leagued yourself with the enemies of the republic, the accursed Americanos!"

Judith's lips came firmly together. She no longer begged for mercy.

"Bring the bridal jewels, Gautomozin," commanded the hag and once more the Indian vanished

"Not yet," said Dick to Bernard in low tones. "Let this farce proceed a little further."

When Gautomozin reappeared, he carried in his arms objects which almost drew cries from the boys' tongues. He handed his burden to Tecuza, and she in turn thrust it toward Judith.

"Behold!" cried she. "Behold the jewels with which the great Montezuma once adorned his bride, the gentle Ixtocli. You shall wear them, my daughter. See! They are worth the ransom of an hundred kings. They have been in this old treasure house for centuries, and no hands have caressed them but mine. Bow your head, girl, and I will place the jeweled serpents about your neck."

"Never!" answered Judith with a perceptible shiver. "I will not become the bride of the sun."

The face of the old hag grew darker than ever. Her right hand disappeared beneath her robe and the next moment a long knife threw back the flashes of the candles in the golden candlesticks. Judith sprang across the room with a wild cry. Terror was depicted on every lineament of her face. She halted before the young soldiers, and a second cry died on her lips as she suddenly caught sight of them.

"Behind us! Quick!" cried Dick. "We will conquer or perish together."

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As the terrified girl obeyed, he and Bernard threw themselves forward, and Tecuza and her companions looked into the muzzles of leveled pistols.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PUMA'S END.

An almost inarticulate cry rose from Tecuza's lips when she saw the startling turn things had taken. The young adventurers stood firm and confronted her with defiant mien.

"Back!" said Dick, in the sternest tones. "You shall go no further with this terror. Judith shall not become the bride of the sun."

"Ah!" exclaimed the guardian of Cholula. "So you have crossed my path again?"

The jewels which she had taken from Gautomozin still dangled from her hands, and she glanced at them at the end of her ejaculation. "Do you not know that you are in the doom trap of the Montezumas?"

"We know we are in a trap!" confessed Dick, abating none of his defiance. "Call off your cat." The puma was crawling forward with her baleful eyes fastened on the two boys.

Tecuza fell back and threw a hasty glance at Gautomozin.

"Is there no way out but by going forward?" asked Bernard, with a look toward Judith.

"The ladder, senors."

"The ladder has fallen down."

"Beyond Tecuza is a way," was the girl's reply. "It leads to the upper world."

The last word had scarcely left her tongue ere the lights went out and the place was left in Stygian darkness. There was a fierce growl from the puma and the sound of footsteps.

"They have gone," whispered Judith.

"Gone to make sure of the trap," answered Dick.

"The old treasure house is full of secret places," Judith returned. "I have heard of them, but am not familiar with the secrets of the Montezumas."

An hour passed. Suddenly a sound like the rush of waters struck upon the ears of the three.

"It is the tide of the underground lake," said Judith with a shiver. "It is said there has always been a secret way between the city and the lake where the gardens of the Montezumas floated many centuries ago."

"Then we are doomed," cried Bernard.

"The water is here," exclaimed Dick. "I feel it about my feet."

This was true, as his companions soon discovered, for the cold tide was forcing its way over the stone floor and with a sound which was calculated to fill them with the most terrible fears.

"It is the work of Tecuza who knows all the secrets of the old treasure house," Judith said. "If the tide rises——"

"It is rising rapidly!" interrupted Dick. "And amid all this infernal darkness, too."

There was now no sound from the water, which came from some unseen quarter. It ate its way over the floor with a silent vengeance that thrilled the trio.

"Are there no niches in the wall?" cried Bernard.

"We must see. It is our last hope."

All three turned to the smooth wall against which the fallen ladder rested and searched eagerly with their hands.

"Here!" suddenly rang out Dick's voice. "I have found steps in the stone."

Judith and Bernard rushed to his side and their hearts leaped suddenly for joy.

"Up!" cried Dick, lifting the girl in his arms. "We will follow, but you first, senorita."

Judith was soon beyond reach of their arms and the boys followed eagerly.

It was a perilous ascent, for the steps were not deep and it required all their nerve to ascend. They did not know how soon the helpful niches might end, and then they would have to cling to the wall till their strength was exhausted.

Judith suddenly gave utterance to a little cry.

"What is it?" asked Dick.

"I feel no niche above me," came back to him.

"None at all? Reach upward as far as you can."

"I have done so, but there is nothing but a smooth wall ahead."

"Nor to the right?"

"No!"

If Dick could have seen the faces of his friends at this juncture he would have looked at pallor. All realized the desperateness of the situation.

Their feet rested in scanty niches, whilst with their hands they were clinging to fragile supports.

"Look downward," said Bernard in a low whisper.

The others turned their heads, and beheld a light in the glare of which stood Tecuza, and near her Gautomozin, with his baleful eyes, which resembled those of a wild beast.

"Into the water," they heard Tecuza say, as she pointed forward. "The Americanos must be beneath the avenging tides from the Lake Tecuzo. Go in and find them, Gautomozin."

The clingers to the wall saw the man glide forward with a light, and as he moved hither and thither they saw him wave his fire above the silent tide like a wand.

"They are not here, Queen," he cried, over his naked shoulder. "The Americanos have escaped!"

A cry of rage leaped from Tecuza's throat.

"How can they have escaped?" she exclaimed. "What gods have rescued the intended victims of sacrifice?"

Gautomozin waded back and shook himself like a dog.

"Come! We shall find them before they reach the opening," and the old hag darted away.

"Now," said Dick. "Down to the water."

They descended as rapidly as possible, and soon stood in the cold fluid which lay about them. A minute later they were in the narrow passage where Tecuza and her attendant had disappeared.

"It is the only hope, senors," Judith said. "We must follow them to the opening which leads to the outward night."

They had not gone far, when a harsh growl grated on every ear and the three stood still.

"The puma!"

It was a word terrible enough to stifle every thought. The Mexican cat which can see by night was near.

"Your knife, senor," said a voice at Dick's elbow, and before he could reply he felt his knife drawn from the leathern belt that encircled his body.

"What would you do?" he asked.

"There is a way to conquer the cat of Mexico," came back from the gloom. "I have seen it done in the forest. The knife and the mantilla outwit him."

"But you cannot see the puma."

"Leave that to me, senor."

Judith took off her mantilla, or shawl for the head, and wrapped it about her left arm. In her right hand was clutched Dick's knife and with compressed lips she glided past the boys. A low cry trembled her lips. It was scarcely human.

Dick and Bernard waited breathlessly in the darkness. They heard the beating of their hearts and kept their fingers at the triggers of their weapons.

All at once the silence was broken by a short growl and then a low cry from the girl.

"One—two—three for vengeance and liberty!" the boys heard her say.

The cry was answered by a brutish gasp of pain and something fell splashing into the water.

"Your knife, senor Dick," said a voice and Dick felt the hilt of the weapon thrust into his grasp.

"Where is the puma?" he cried.

"She is dead, senor."

"You killed her?"

"Si."

"Are you wounded?"

"No. The mantilla felt her teeth, not my flesh. As she bit, the knife found her heart."

They stepped across the huge body lying in the water, and pushed forward once more. Judith, leading the way, had a smile on her face, and her hand led Bernard forward.

They reached dry stones at last. The water no longer curled about their feet, and they were rejoicing. Somewhere ahead must lie deliverance; somewhere must be the starlit night and safety.

"Hist!" fell abruptly from the beautiful guide's tongue, and all stood still.

"They are here yet," said a voice. "I will find them for you, Colonel."

It was the voice of Tecuza and there was no guessing whom she addressed.

"Tell your slave to bring up his torch," was the reply in a man's voice. "This pit is darker than the lower one."

A light flared far away. It came on and on until at last it threw its light over two figures. Colonel Machete of the lancers stood revealed.

"We will go on now," screeched Tecuza. "The girl for you, but the young senors for the altars of blood!"

Dick and Bernard uttered a cry simultaneously.

"Halt!" rang out their voices. "One step more and you die in your tracks!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST SACRIFICE.

The lancer colonel, from the very intonation of the voice, knew that to disobey would terminate his wild career. He therefore stood in his tracks and glared at the young Americans upon whose forms the light had fallen. His lip curled proudly and the hand which sought his sword returned to his side. Old Tecuza turned upon him with scorn in her dark eyes.

"Is Colonel Machete a coward?" she cried. "Does the man who has led the lancers of the republic fear two young senors who have come to Montezuma's treasure house to die?"

Colonel Machete permitted his gaze to fall at his feet.

"Where is my good mountain cat?" continued the hag. "Where is the tawny queen of the chapparal?"

"Your beast lies dead in the water behind us," answered Dick.

A cry of rage sprang from the woman's throat. She would have darted forward if the hand of Colonel Machete had not held her back.

"We will leave the young spies to perish where they are," she hissed. "We will go back, my Colonel, and, though you may lose your bride, the vengeance of these dungeons shall be complete."

She seized the trembling Gautomozin and forced him back. Her lips placed suddenly at his ear spake words which had the sound of a serpent's hiss:

"You know, Gautamozin," she cried. "You know the secret of the great tomb."

The man nodded as his face lost color.

"Be quick, then," continued Tecuza. "The train has long been laid and it needs but a spark."

Gautamozin bounded away followed by Tecuza and the lancer colonel. The three young people looked at one another questioningly in the waning light.

"It means doom if we haste not," breathed Judith. "Did you not see the last flashing of those terrible eyes?"

"They burned like live coals," answered Dick.

"They flashed like meteors in the night

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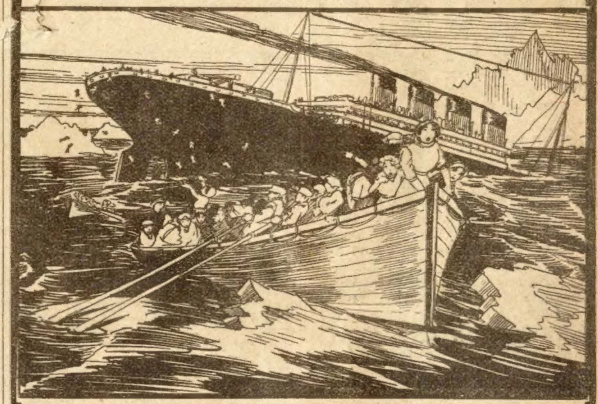

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sky," put in Bernard, in excitement. "Haste, then. There must be a last card for this mad creature to play."

The sounds of footsteps died away in the dark distance. The three friends bounded forward.

"Where are we now?" suddenly whispered Dick. "I can feel no walls anywhere."

"We have reached another chamber," Judith responded. "It is said that the palace of Montezuma had a thousand-and-one underground rooms. We must be in the heart of it."

At that moment from out the unseen distance came a low song that increased in volume as it rose and fell amid the darkness. All stopped and listened.

Judith put her hands to her ears.

"It is a death song," she said. "It is the death song of the Aztec princes who perished at the hands of Cortez. They would not reveal the burial place of Montezuma's treasure, and, singing their song, they died by torture."

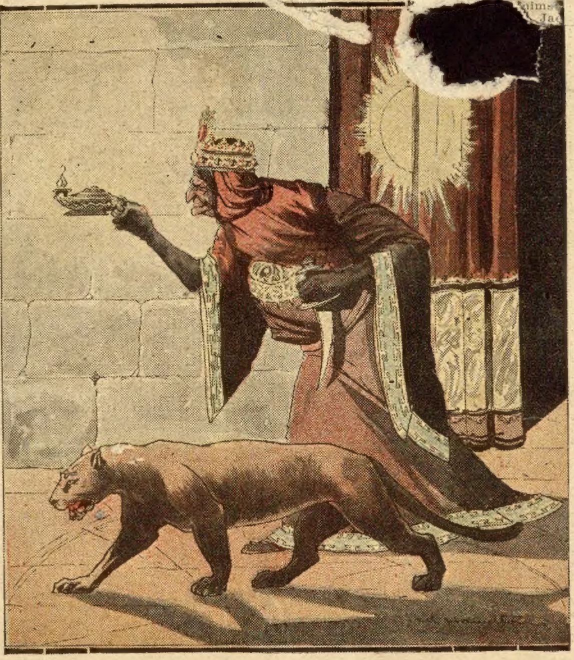
"Come," shouted Dick. "Let us find the singer."

The strain ceased as suddenly as it had burst into being. It died away without an echo.

"Now," cried Bernard. "One forward rush, and we may find the way out of this tomb."

He had barely ceased speaking when a terrific noise smote their ears and they were thrown backward as if they had been hurled from some mighty machine. By and by they struggled to their feet. The place was still in darkness and the air was almost suffocating.

"It was the mine," gasped Bern[illegible]



"Ho! you have come!" cried the hag.

"It was the mine which Tecuza fired."

"We are shut up in a real tomb. The floor is covered with rocks, the outlet is barred."

If there had been a ray of light by them they could have looked at the palest faces that ever faced the threshold of doom. Everywhere there were great rocks which had been broken by the explosion, and there seemed no way out of the trap.

Dick at last managed to strike a light with his tinder box and held the tiny taper above his head. A confused heap of idols lay on the floor. They seemed to mock their doom, and the three stared at them a full minute in silence.

"We must get out!" cried Dick heroically. "Perhaps beyond that mountain of debris is safety. At least we can try."

Aided by the little light they began to mount the heap of ruins, and at last, by dint of effort, gained the summit. Devastation lay before them as far as the light revealed anything.

"On, on!" cried Judith. "There is water behind us. The lake is again losing its tide."

They scrambled down the heap and hastened on.

"Look!" ejaculated Bernard, clutching Dick's sleeve. "The explosion did not finish the witch of Cholula."

The youth pointed excitedly forward, and Dick, holding his breath, stared straight ahead. A light had suddenly burst into being. Within it stood the ogress of the treasure house. Her face seemed to have aged a thousand years within the space of ten minutes. Her long white hair fell almost to her sandals and in her uplifted hands was held the jeweled scepter, each gem sending forth rays of dazzling brightness.

"The hour has come," the friends heard her cry. "The blood of the Aztecs shall flow no longer in the veins of Tecuza. The republic is dead and the feet of the Americanos curse its soil. The spies and the bride of the sun have perished, and the halls of the Montezumas are no more. Come, my Gautomozin. Light the last flame in the treasure house of the great Aztec emperor."

A half-naked figure glided to Tecuza's side. It carried a bundle of faggots which were placed on the floor. When the fire flared up and blazed with wild fierceness Tecuza began to take from a large beaded bag which hung at her side objects that glistened. She drew them forth by handsful and cast all into the raging fire. The three silent and awe-stricken spectators watched her with feelings akin to horror.

"The riches of Montezuma!" whispered Judith, who had leaned forward, and her eyes became riveted upon the sacrifice. Let them perish. Hundreds have died in search of them."

"What has become of Colonel Machete?" queried Dick.

"Who knows or who cares?" answered the girl with a proud curling of her lips. "But watch the last priestess of the ancients. Her work is almost done."

The last lot of riches had fallen into the fire. Gautomozin had stood by with folded arms and an enigmatical countenance. He seemed to have been transformed into a statue.

"Now, slave. You must keep [illegible] secret with your life," cried Tecuza whirling suddenly upon the Indian. "The treasure of Montezuma must have its guardian."

Gautomozin drew from beneath the robe which covered a part of his form a knife with a strangely curved blade. A step carried him to the flame. The next moment the knife was lifted, and when it descended the dark figure of the Indian dropped to the stones.

The boys and Judith uttered cries of horror.

"Who speaks?" shouted Tecuza, falling back and flashing her glowing orbs in their direction.

"Your last prisoners," was the response, and all three darted forward. "Lead us from this terror hall and you shall live."

She stood a moment longer in her tracks, and then turned on her heel and disappeared, as though the stony floor had parted and swallowed her. "Safety lies ahead," cried Judith. "The way is no longer unknown to me, for Colonel Machete brought me hither through this room."

It was true. When at last the captives emerged from the underground world into the brilliant starlight they fell exhausted. Behind them lay the secrets of the centuries and the treasures of the great Aztec king.

It was some days before either of our young friends could find voice to relate their adventures. At first they were laughed at, but Captain Donovan at last believed, and, guided by the boys, he led an expedition to the vaults of the hidden ruins.

They found the scene of the last sacrifice, they found in the ashes of the fire the body of Gautomozin, and not far away in another chamber, seated on a strangely carved throne, the figure of Tecuza arrayed in the dress of an Aztec princess.

There was a wild search for the wonderful treasure of Montezuma, and in this the searchers were aided by the charts which had fallen into the boys' possession. But the only part of the vast horde which was secured was a heap of jewels which, falling from Tecuza's hands, had rolled beyond the line of the fire.

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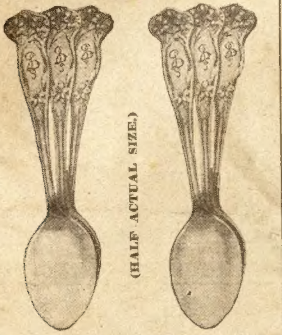
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tered jewels of Montezuma, they had all they cared for, and Dick, when after the war he led the beautiful Judith to the altar, placed around her neck the great love stones of the Aztec, the king gems which had once been kissed by Montezuma's empress.

Bernard had enough with which to endow an American bride, and on the day of his wedding he learned that deep in the mountains, torn by pumas, had been found the body of the lancer colonel.

Vengeance had at last overtaken the merciless guerrillero of Mexico, and the storms scattered his bones.

Next week's Ledger will contain the opening installment of another rattling good story for boys called "Catching the Smugglers, or Frank Coke's Bravery." You will find it very interesting, so don't fail to read it.

The End.

* * *

FATHER REFUSED.

"Gertrude," he said (in a voice which the novelists called muffled), I wonder——"

"Yes, John," she breathed. "Yes—John?"

Now, ever since he had called that evening he had been acting in a strange and nervous manner, looking fixedly (for instance) at the tip of Gertrude's nose, so that once she had sauntered carelessly to the mirror over the fireplace and had carefully examined the point of his apparent interest. In addition to this he had dusted his fore[illegible] with his handkerchief as of[illegible] as a young housewife dust[illegible] piano when expecting the first vis[illegible]er husband's mother. And [illegible] ha[illegible] which had never be[illegible] had shuffle[illegible] fee[illegible] and Bernard w[illegible]d fo[illegible]g. And [illegible]e darkness. They [illegible] o[illegible] unmistaka[illegible]eir hearts and k[illegible]le had suddenly cr[illegible]riggers of thei[illegible] Oh! Oh! He is going[illegible] at once the [illegible]ow I shall know how it fe[illegible]

"Gertrude, [illegible] said (in the same voice as before), "do you know whether your father is in?"

To which she inwardly responded: "I shall have a church wedding with five hundred invitations, and Annie Marshall will not be one of my bridesmaids. I wish the White Sales were still going on, but perhaps the girls will get me up a linen shower and that will be all right. Now, let me see. White net over white satin and silver trimmings will look nice and I can wear mother's veil and carry lilies of the valley with one red rose, and pa, of course, will give me away." This reminded her of the subject in hand and (blushing timidly) she answered. "Why, yes, John, I think father is in."

"Could I see him?" asked John, swallowing as the whale must have swallowed when negotiating Jonah.

"Why, yes," she coyly answered, "Wait and I'll see where he is."

She lightly tripped away (humming a pretty air) into the hall and into one of the other rooms, where she silently closed ~~the~~ the door behind her and beamed at father, who was resting his feet and reading the evening paper.

"What's the matter?" said father, casting up his north eye over the top of the paper. "I thought you had that young man calling on you again tonight."

For reply Gertrude placed her finger on her lip and simpered like a good one.

"He wants to see you," she whispered.

"Wants to see me?" said father. "What does he want to see me for? Does he think I'm going to sing to him and feed him fudge?"

"Of course he doesn't," whispered Gertrude. "Sh! I guess it's about—something else." And peering under the table (for father's slippers), she added, "I guess it's about—me."

"Has he asked you?" whispered father with growing excitement (while Gertrude hurriedly put his slippers on.)

"No, he's all rattled up," she whispered back. "I guess he forgot which comes first."

"Ah-ha!" exclaimed father, fastening his collar. "Well, he's a nice young fellow, isn't he?"

Gertrude nodded while she smoothed his hair. "Don't be too hard on him, father!" she whispered.

"Hard on him!" thought father to himself. "Now why in the name of common sense should I be hard on him? What have we been educating her for? And buying her all these clothes? And sending her away in the summer? Wasn't it all done to get her married? Well! And here comes a decent young fellow and wants her! And it it may be her only chance, for all I know! Imagine a man waiting twenty-six years to get a shot at a moose and then scaring it away! Oh, yes! I'll be hard on him! I—guess—not!"

Whereupon he sat himself down at the desk in the corner, drew out a sheet of notepaper, dipped his pen in the ink and turned to Gertrude with the air of a man who is very well pleased with the setting of the stage. "All right, Gertrude," he nodded. "Send him in."

He turned to his writing and wrote: "A stitch in time saves nine. A stitch in time saves nine. A stitch——" Frowning slightly, he read this important communication twice, dotted an i, blotted it and carefully sealed it in a long envelope. Even Gertrude, watching from the side of the portieres, was puzzled and yet impressed by the majesty of this performance.

"Well, John," said father, suddenly turning and holding out a box of cigars, "what can I do for you?"

"You—you can make me happy," said John with a fervent gesture of his feet. "Thank you, sir." He lit the wrong end of the cigar, placed it in the ash tray and put the match in his mouth. "I beg your pardon," he stammered, reversing the process. "It—it means everything to me."

"It means a lot to me, too," thought father. "It's a good thing that you don't know how much it does mean to me. Ha!" But aloud he only said: "If there is anything I can do for you, John, let me hear it."

"Thank you—er—don't mention it, sir," said John, tying his feet in a tangle which would have made the Gordian Knot look foolish. "I mean—well—I never did a thing like this before and I—I feel pretty nervous about how to begin!"

"Oh, ask for her; ask for her!" thought father. "Land o' Goshen; don't you know how to use your tongue? Ask for her, and get her, and have it over with!" But outwardly he smiled and aloud he said: "Well, John, there has to be a first time to everything, you know."

"Yes, sir," said John, "thank you, sir. Well, to tell you the truth, I've got a few things coming due on the first of the month, and I wanted to know if you could lend me a couple of hundred dollars for a month or two."

And as for father, I wish to say that father's eyes stood out and his breath came short. And as for Gertrude, I wish to say that Gertrude took after her father. And after John had gone away empty-handed (but with what the novelists call a flea in his ear), Gertrude's father turned to her and said:

"It wasn't you he wanted at all. He had the nerve to ask me for two hundred dollars! And he called it a loan! Gertrude, don't you ever let that young man call here again! He only comes here for what he can get!"

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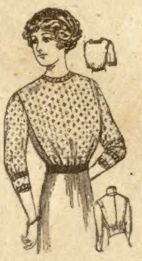
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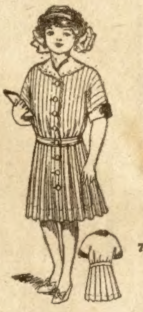
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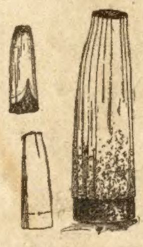
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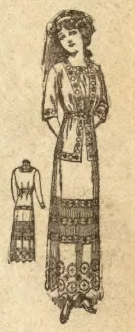
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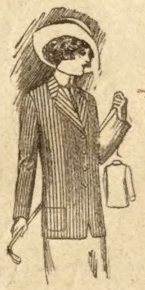
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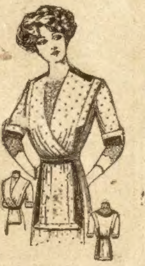
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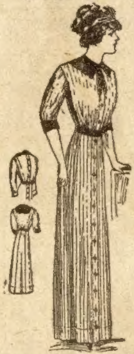
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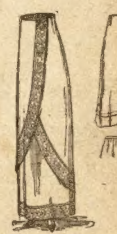
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THE FAIRY CORNER

MY GUARDIAN.

The key that lives within the hole
  That tunnels through my door
Has one large eye that never sleeps
  But looks straight out before.

I call him my policeman, for
  He guards my room for me,
Which no one else in all the world
  Could do so well as he.

If toward the bolt I turn his face,
  You'll have to go away;
He will not let you swing the door
  No matter what you say;

But if I turn him back again,
  You're welcome to come through;
You would not dream, to look at him,
  What that small key can do.

❦

Jack.

By a little country town there is a lake almost four miles in length. It sparkles in the sunshine like a blue ribbon threaded with silver. At the north are mountains, tall and woody. On the western bank are many hotels and cottages, where people from the city come to rest in the summer months. They row their boats for pleasure and catch fish in the bright water or gather lilies with golden hearts, and they enjoy the life on the lake among the hills. On the eastern shore are fine and productive farms, which furnish good things for the people in the hotels and cottages.

Mr. Brown's farm was at the northeast corner of the lake. He was a carpenter as well as a farmer, and he had a shop where he did all sorts of work with his valuable tools. He had contrived an arrangement to catch fish, too, that was not only a convenience to him but a great source of profit.

The trap Mr. Brown constructed was designed to catch the fish alive. It was so arranged that the fish entered a box-like affair from which they could not escape. The water flowed through it and the fish were apparently contented and could be caught at any moment. Mr. Brown supplied some of the hotels with bass, pickerel, suckers and eels. It was quite a source of income to him and no trouble, as all he had to do was to open the door at the top of the trap and take out whatever was needed.

Some time ago Mr. Brown thought his fish were not so abundant as they should be, and so he determined to watch for the thief. At last he saw a flock of crows stealing some of the fish out of the trap. They would wait for a shiny beauty to come to the top of the trap and would seize it and fly off with it. The farmer brought his gun and shot several of the crows. One was merely lamed and, as he was a handsome fellow, the farmer fitted a ring to his leg with a little chain attached and fastened the chain to a post where Master Crow could sit at his ease. Jack, as the crow was named, grew tame after a little while, and Mr. Brown became fond of him. He fed him himself and always bade him good morning.

"Jack," he would say, "say 'good morning.'"

Jack would cock up his head and snap his bill over and over again, but no sound came. When Mr. Brown gave him his food he repeated "thanks" several times, but the bird made no sound.

This went on for a long time, and Jack had never uttered a word. Mr. Brown clipped his wings so that he could not fly and gave him his liberty. He thought the bird would be happier free. One morning as he went out to find Jack he did not see him as usual, and he called "Jack! Jack!" All at once over his head he heard a hoarse and plaintive cry of "Jack! Jack! Jack!"

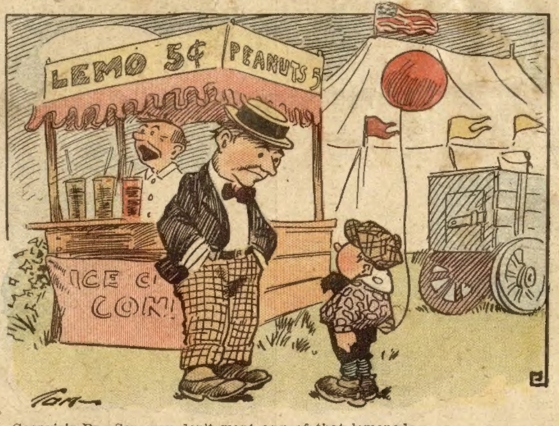
He was much astonished and could hardly believe it was Jack really speaking, but it was. Jack was in trouble. He had flown into some bushes and was so caught that he could not free [illegible]elf. Mr. Brown went to the rescue. [illegible]k, solemn as ever, hung by one of his legs. In a short time he would have been dead. No doubt he was glad to be rescued, for as Mr. Brown took him out of the briers and smoothed his glossy feathers he opened his mouth several times, "Morning, morning; thanks, thanks; Jack, Jack!" he said.

People came from far and near to hear Jack speak. He was never shy, but those three words were the only ones he ever said. He began to be mischievous and stole all the keys he could find.

The farmer one day missed the key of the tool-chest. He got another, and that was taken. The neighbors began to complain of losing little things, and at last Jack was discovered in the act of taking a door key. He was watched and followed. Chattering and muttering his three words, "Jack, morning, thanks," he hopped over to a corner of the garden and dug away for some time. Then he went to his perch and fell asleep.

Mr. Brown went to investigate the corner of the garden and such an array of stolen articles as he found there! Keys, spoons, bits of tin, anything bright that had attracted Jack had been carefully hidden.

Poor Jack! His day of freedom was short. Once more the ring was put upon his leg, and the little chain fastened to a tree. His proud spirit resented the loss of his liberty and he became sullen and peevish. His bill snapped sometimes, and he seemed about to speak, but he never did. Mr. Brown kept him, however, and gave him the best of care as long as he lived.



Georgie's Pa—Son, you don't want any of that lemonade.
Georgie—Yes, I do; I'm so thirsty I can't hear the band.

❦

Tot Wit.

A 4-year-old miss, having been told by her mother that there would be no dogs in heaven, said: "Oh, you forget about the Skye terriers, mamma."

Small Edith was much interested in the colored plates in a work on physiology. "Mamma," she asked, "what makes our blood red?" While her mother was searching her brain for a suitable answer, Edith continued: "Oh, I know; it's 'cause we eat strawberries!"

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